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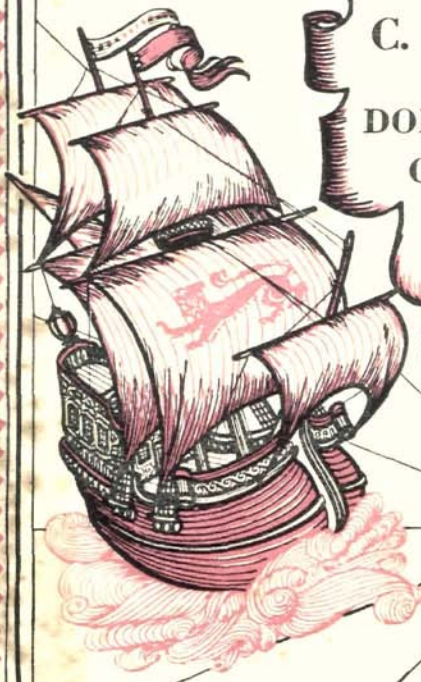

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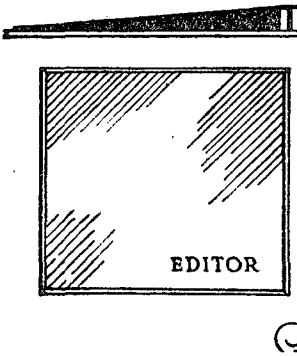

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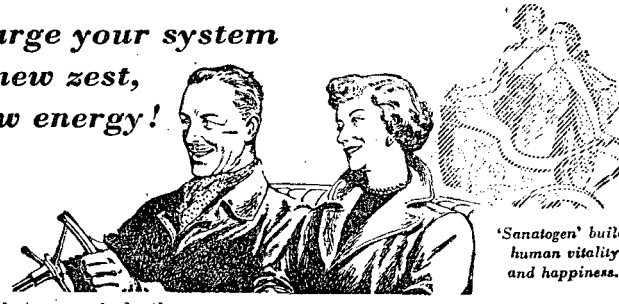

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ARGOSY

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On Such a Day as This

IN the immense crystal spaces of fine windy air thus bounded by blue sky, black woods, and green grass, the jackdaws play. They soar, they float, they dance, and they dive and carve sudden magnificent precipices in the air, crying all the time with sharp, joyous cries that are in harmony with the great heights and the dashing wind. The carter's boy raises his head from the furrow and shouts to them now and then, while the brass furnishings of his horses gleam, their shoulders grow proud and their black tails stream out above the blue furrow and the silver plough.

Suddenly a pheasant is hurled out of a neighbouring copse; something crosses the road; and out over a large and shining meadow goes a fox, tall and red, going easily as if he sailed in the wind. He crosses that meadow, then another, and he is half a mile away before the first hound crosses the road upon his scent.

Run hard, fox. It is good to see your long swift trail across the meadow and away, away; on such a day a man would give everything to run like that. Run hard, and may you escape, for it would not be well to die on such a day, when the command has gone forth from the heart of this high blue heaven, Be beautiful and enjoy and live!

EDWARD THOMAS, 1878-1917

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CAYETANO THE PERFECT

**"Today will be my last fight," he said,
"I swear it"**

by BARNABY CONRAD

CAYETANO ORTEGA woke up at twelve o'clock on Sunday with a throb in his head from the hangover and a sudden knot in his stomach from fear. "Yes," his brain said to him, "today is the day and there's no getting out of it and it's because of her and they'll be here soon to start getting you ready."

He flung back the covers and went quickly across the shabby hotel room to the window. He tugged the shade and let it bang up. The burst of sunlight blinded him for a moment. Then he made out the cobbled streets of Sevilla two stories below, and his incredibly green eyes found what he had to see—the flagpole over the *avuntamiento* building. The red and yellow flag curled lifelessly round the pole.

"Thank God," he breathed. "Thank God there's no wind anyway."

He staggered back to the bed and fell across it. He lay there for a while, not thinking of anything, really, except: *Today, today, today!* Then he took a cigarette off the unpainted table and lighted it with shaking hands. He stuffed the pillow behind his head so that he could look out of the window. It was a fine spring day and he could see the swallows wheeling round the Giralda tower and a drove of pigeons heading for the Maria Luisa park. What a fine day, he thought. What a hell of a fine day for everyone else. He unconsciously ran his forefinger up and down the long scar on the left side of his face. It would have been a good face except for that scar, rough-hewed and big-jawed.

Because it was Sunday, there were none of the street cries or noise of the old taxis or clatter of the carriages over the cobblestones. That would begin before the fight. Cayetano looked at his watch. Twelve-fifteen. The fight began at three-thirty. Everyone in Sevilla was going to today's bullfight. Not because of him—Cayetano Ortega. No, at thirty four Cayetano was through, finished, *acabado*—as any small child in Spain could tell you.

The plaza would be jammed to the top because of four things. The first was the other matador, Luis Morales, called the Tiger

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from Málaga because of his brute courage. Secondly, the Domecq wineries were offering a twenty thousand peseta prize to the bullfighter who put up the best show during the six day fair, and this being the last day the *toreros* would be trying their hardest. Thirdly, the bulls were four Pablo Romeros, the largest and most dangerous looking animals that had been fought in Sevilla for a decade. Fourthly, the public thought that the other matador in today's *mano á mano*—the hand-to-hand duel—was El Estudiante, who always put up a competent, if not brilliant, performance.

They didn't know that El Estudiante had had twelve inches of horn pierce into his stomach in Logroño yesterday afternoon as he went over the horn to kill and might not live. Most of the public didn't know yet, but the bullfighting game is a tight group and word travelled amongst the pigtailed folk like lightning.

Cayetano had been in Los Corales Café after dinner when he heard it—a quiet, smallish man sitting off at a table with her, Maruja, and drinking too many *manzanillas*. On the wall above him was the mounted head of a bull he had killed ten years ago with a silver plaque saying that he had been conceded the ears and tail of the animal after a " soul-stirring encounter."

Funny how much harder it was to get someone to drink with you when you were a has-been. He remembered the old days, ten years before, when he couldn't walk into Los Corales without having ten people swarm around him. It wasn't that the other *toreros* and the *aficionados* snubbed him now; they always spoke to him warmly. It was just that they were sitting with some of the big stars, and that no one thought to ask Cayetano Ortega—the man they'd once called Cayetano the Perfect—to sit with them.

He might not even have learned about El Estudiante, except that as he and Maruja started to leave he happened to hear Luis Morales saying to the group at his table in a loud voice, " Well, I could kill all four and I don't think there'd exactly be any complaints from the crowd, but why, I say? Why, when I've got the prize already, why should I strain myself to kill his bulls? "

Morales was a big man—heavy for a bullfighter—with a black shock of hair, handsome in a greasy way. He was on top now, the place where Cayetano had been ten years ago. Cayetano had the idea that he was talking loud for Maruja's benefit.

Cayetano turned back and guided Maruja up to Morales' table. " *Buenas noches, señores,*" he said quietly.

" *Muy buenas,* Cayetano," said Arruza and the old *banderillero* Pinturas. " And Señorita Flores."

Morales didn't say anything; he had a mouthful of *paella* and he was occupied in letting his eyes roam over Maruja. It was surprising

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that he should have been interested in her at all, for she was hardly the type of girl for a successful bullfighter. She was little and dark with her hair pulled back in a bun, no lipstick, but with big black honest eyes that gave her plain face a certain unexpected prettiness and at the same time a little sadness. But Morales was interested.

"Excuse me for interrupting," said Cayetano to Arruza, "but did I hear you say that El Estudiante isn't fighting tomorrow?"

"He got hurt in Logroño yesterday," said Pinturas.

Cayetano shook his head. "Bad luck. Who's—who's fighting the *mano á mano* tomorrow then?"

"That's what Manolo Delgado would like to know," laughed Arruza, who was a new young star. "He's got every ticket in the plaza sold and no second fighter. He's running round town as crazy as a goat. He wants me, but I've got this wrist." He held up his hand with a dirty bandage on it.

"He wanted me to take the whole *corrida*," said Morales, wiping his mouth with the back of his fingers and looking at Maruja. "Offered me seventy five thousand more pesetas—but I say, why? I've got the prize safe anyway, why kill myself for seventy five thousand measly pesetas?" He pulled up a chair; Maruja hesitated and then sat down next to him.

Cayetano's heart had already started to pound, but he asked casually, "Is—is Manolo anywhere around? I think I know somebody he might get."

They looked at him curiously. "Why, yes," said Pinturas. "He said he'd be over at the Frontón."

"This somebody wouldn't happen to be you," asked Morales with a wry smile, "would it, matador? Don't tell me Cayetano the Perfect is out for the prize at this late date."

"No," said Cayetano, as he felt himself colour.

And then for a second he glanced over at Maruja, but it was long enough to see that look, so that he suddenly felt as though he'd been struck hard in the face. It wasn't exactly a sneer; Maruja wasn't that type of person. It was worse. It was more the look one might get on one's face while helplessly watching several dogs maul a lone dog that could lick the pack of them if it only had the nerve to stand and fight. Cayetano had been dreading this look for months, knowing that it was welling up inside her and stifling her love for him. It wasn't that she wanted him to be a great bullfighter again; she just wanted him to be a man again.

"Maruja—I—are you coming?" he said, not looking at her.

"No," said Maruja. "No, I'll wait for you here."

Cayetano took his sombrero off the hat stand and after murmuring, "*Hasta luego*," he went out into the warm Sevilla night.

He heard Morales laugh behind him, and he thought he might

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have heard Maruja's silver tinkle. He felt his neck and cheeks burn. His hand went to his face and his finger traced the scar. He walked down the narrow street toward the Frontón.

Then he wheeled abruptly and started walking away from it. He laughed a bit at himself. Manolo'd never bill me in a million years, he said to himself. Why even talk to him about it? Certainly he wouldn't bill me for eighty thousand. Perhaps he'd offer me ten or fifteen thousand if he couldn't get anybody else on this short notice. Risk my life for fifteen thousand? Eighty thousand was worth risking your life for; it meant that it could buy you into some decent business, get you out of this rotten game. But he knew the money was secondary now. He wanted to fight and fight well, for her—he *had* to fight for her and what was left of his self-respect! But how to get Manolo to give him the fight?

Cayetano came to a little outside stand where they sold wine. He ordered a *manzanilla*, threw it down and then had another. It was in the midst of his second when he suddenly realized how he could get the fight tomorrow, and his hand began to shake as he thought of it. He quickly had one more and didn't let himself think again of what he was going to do until he had the bracing wine inside him.

He paid for the drinks and strode down Sierpes Street quickly before his courage could leave him. He came to the door of the Frontón, hesitated, then went in. The Frontón was a *jai alai* palace, smoky and dark except for the bright lights focussed on the court. There was a game going on between two girl teams, and their cries mingled with the apathetic shouts of the people in the audience.

Cayetano went upstairs and made out the big shape of the promoter in the first-row of the balcony. He was talking to someone and he turned when Cayetano put a hand on his shoulder.

"Oh," said Manolo, with a not unfriendly grunt. "It's been a century. How goes it, matador?"

"*Muy bien*," said Cayetano. "Fine." He could make out Delgado's fat face now in the dark and the two big teeth in front that almost crossed over each other.

"I heard you had a bad *cornada* two years ago?" said Manolo.

"No," said Cayetano. "It wasn't bad." Not so bad! It merely ripped out of him whatever small bit of nerve and will to fight that was left in him.

It was that cursed wind in Valencia. Everything was going fine—it looked as though Cayetano was finally making his comeback—and then a sudden gust of wind had blown the cape across his legs in the middle of a pass, the bull had swerved after it, and, well—the hospital for six months. He had three bad horn wounds in his life, each because the wind had blown the capes.

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" Got a lot of contracts this season, Cayetano?" asked Delgado mechanically. It was just a polite question; Delgado must have known that Cayetano had had only one real fight all year in his home town of Córdoba—and that he had flopped miserably. There was a little wind that day and he had fought three feet away from the bulls and pale with terror.

Cayetano said suddenly, " I've got to fight tomorrow, Manolo."

Delgado shook his head. " Sorry, *chico*." The polite manner was gone and he was all business. " I've got a call in to Cadiz now. I think I can get Luis Miguel for the same price that El Estudiante was coming for."

Cayetano swallowed. " I'll—I'll fight free."

" Are you drunk or crazy?" said Delgado frowning.

" I'll fight free!" repeated Cayetano. " There's one condition, though. If I win the twenty thousand peseta prize, you have to pay me what you would have paid El Estudiante."

Delgado chewed his cigar. " Have you seen the bulls?"

" No," said Cayetano. " But I know they're big."

Delgado stared at him solemnly. Then he gave a laugh. Then he gave a louder laugh, and clapped Cayetano on the shoulder. " *Chico*, you're drunk and you're crazy but I'm too much of a business man to pass this by." He grew serious again as suddenly as he had laughed.

" But, Cayetano, you can't be better than Morales. Even if he has a bad day tomorrow, he still cut both ears the day before yesterday and that counts for the prize."

Cayetano's heart sank. " Both ears?"

" Both ears. You'll have to cut ears and tail on one of your bulls. Better take the fifteen thousand, *chico*. I'll make it twenty, but I can't go any higher."

Cayetano hesitated. He put his hand up to the scar. He felt a little sick. He wanted a drink. Then he heard himself saying, " No, all or nothing, Manolo. I'll get the prize. I can win."

Manolo sighed again. " All right, *chico*. If that's the way you want it, all right."

And now it was Sunday and Cayetano looked at his wrist watch and it was quarter to one already. He yearned for three-thirty to come and at the same time he prayed that it would never come. He blew out a cloud of smoke and wondered what was keeping Pinturas. He should have been back from the drawing fifteen minutes ago. He got up and went to the window. He saw that there was still no wind and pulled the shade down. He went back to bed, and lighted another cigarette.

He was thinking of Maruja now. He hadn't gone back to the

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café last night after signing the contract with Delgado. He'd felt sure she wouldn't be there—that she would have gone out with Morales, and he didn't dare go back to find out.

Fifteen minutes later there was a knock on the door. Pinturas at last, Cayetano thought.

"*Adelante!*" he called, and the door opened. It was a little monkey faced man with a beret—Suárez, the sword boy.

"*Buenos días*, matador," he said.

Cayetano sat up in bed. "The *traje* is in the closet."

The little man went to the closet, took out the uniform and stripped off the white protective covers. "Ahhh," said the sword boy appreciatively as he turned the heavy gold and green suit round on the hanger. "They don't make them like this any more." It was blood stained and tarnished, but the best Manfredo ever made. Suárez laid it out neatly on the chair with the frilled shirt and tie and stockings.

Pinturas came in without knocking ten minutes later.

"What did we draw?" Cayetano asked quickly.

"Well, we're in luck, matador!" Pinturas tried to work his old face into a reassuring smile. "Your first is a gem, a real little gem, with a comfortable head, and the smallest of the lot."

"Which means I've got the biggest for my second," said Cayetano. His fingers marked the scar on his face. "How big is he?"

Pinturas' face went serious. "It's a cathedral, Cayetano. Open of horn and big as the Alcázar. But there's no wind, thank God."

Cayetano got out of bed casually and went to the bathroom. He didn't want them to see his hands trembling. He brushed his teeth. He tried to shave, but he was afraid of cutting himself, so he stopped and took a long bath first. He did better afterwards with the shaving. When he came out with a bath towel round him it was ten minutes past two. The towel didn't quite hide the white scar that ran down his leg from his hip.

"We'd better start," said Suárez. He had had some coffee brought up. Pinturas had gone to get dressed.

"Yes," said Cayetano. "We'd better." He gulped some coffee after he put on his underwear. A matador doesn't eat the day of a fight so that he can be operated upon immediately if he gets gored.

It was two forty-five by the time Cayetano got the three pairs of silk stockings on and the sash and knee strings tied exactly right and the artificial pigtail clipped on tight to his hair that was combed back wet and even blacker than usual. He had just been helped into the ornate vest and heavy jacket when there was a light knock on the door.

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"*Adelante!*" Cayetano called. It was Maruja.

"*Hola!*" she said softly. She stood in the doorway for a moment. Then she came in a little awkwardly.

Cayetano turned to Suárez, and jerked his head, and the little man slipped out into the hall. "What are you doing here?"

"They say you are fighting," she said. "I—I thought you might want me here. I waited for you last night."

He took her hands in his. He cleared his throat. "You're good to have come. This is an important fight. It's my last fight. The most important of my life."

Suárez knocked and came in. "No time left, matador." He began to gather up the leather sword case and the canvas pannier with the capes.

Cayetano took the black hat off the chair, held it in both hands by the knobs, and dipped his head into it. Then he put the embroidered cape over his arm and turned back to Maruja. He was very pale and there were little beads of sweat on his upper lip.

They looked into each other's eyes for a long moment. Then she gave a little moan and started to put her arms round him, but he caught her wrists and stepped back.

"Don't touch the *traje*," he said. "It's bad luck. I'm going now. You stay here. I'll be back soon."

"No," she said. "I'm—I'm going to the ring. I must go!"

"You stay here," he commanded. He leaned forward and kissed her. "This is my last fight, *nena*, I swear it to you."

Pinturas had been right. Cayetano's first bull was a jewel indeed—a fine brave little bull that charged the cape as straight and true as though on rails with no tricks or hooking. There wasn't a breath of the dreaded wind, and for the first time in years Cayetano worked in close to the bull, letting the horn go by his legs a foot away instead of a yard, making his feet stay still and not dance out of the way as the bull hurled itself at the big scarlet cape.

The fear knot in his stomach began to loosen after the first few charges, and he began to unfurl the slow classic passes that years before had earned him the name Cayetano the Perfect.

With the *muleta*—the small heart-shaped cape that is draped over the sword for the last third of the fight—Cayetano was even better, working closer and closer to the animal. When the time came to kill, he took the sword out of the *muleta*, sighted down the blade and flung himself over the bull's right horn to sink it in between the shoulders almost to the hilt.

The animal charged three times more and then sagged down against the fence dead. The crowd went wild. The *presidente* up in the box took out his handkerchief and waved it once for an ear

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and again for the other ear. The clamour kept up until he waved it again for the tail.

Cayetano took his sword out of the dead bull, bowed his sweaty head to the *presidente* and walked across the sand to the red fence. He had Maruja and the prize and the seventy five thousand on top of it! There was nothing to worry about now.

Pinturas came running up to him with the ears and the tail.

"Now just play it wide and safe with your other one and everything will be fine," he panted.

Cayetano had almost forgotten his second one. The crowd was cheering him and wanting him to take a lap round the ring. He started round, holding up the ears and the tail to the crowd, but there came the ominous roll of drums and the split trumpet notes that meant Morales' bull was coming down the dark passageway and out into the sun of the arena. Cayetano ducked through an opening in the fence and watched the bull skid into the ring. The bull was a little larger than Cayetano's had been. He watched the *banderillero* doubling it to find out which horn it hooked with. He won't do anything with this animal, Cayetano thought. He's lost the prize—why risk his neck?

But he was wrong, very wrong. Perhaps it was because of Maruja. Perhaps it was because Morales had too much pride to be beaten by a has-been; or perhaps it was what they call "*amor propio*"—the "self-love" that every real matador has that refuses to let him be bettered in the ring by anyone. Whatever it was, Morales fought beyond himself, fought as he'd never done before and would never do again.

When it came time to kill he threw away the *muleta* and borrowed a big, broad-brimmed *cordobés* hat from a spectator, focussed the bull's attention on it, hurled himself forward and sank the sword in between the withers. It was a dangerous trick, diverting the bull's lunge with such a small object, but he got away with it. The bull only charged twice more before keeling over dead. That was partly the reason why the crowd went so wild and why the *presidente* had to wave his handkerchief once for an ear, again for another ear, again for the tail—and still again for the hoof.

Cayetano hadn't even watched the fight. He'd been sitting on a stack of folded *muletas* in the passageway, feeling weak and nauseated. The applause and the screams of "*Ola!*" told him how things were going, but he knew he had lost the prize. Well, let Morales have the filthy prize. Cayetano had done his best. He had saved his honour with Maruja. And yet inside of him there was still a bit of *amor propio* that kept saying to him: "Show them, show Maruja, show Morales, show them all! Make them never forget the last fight of Cayetano Ortega!"

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The drum rolled across the ring and the trumpets blared, and the big door swung open. Cayetano got up slowly and took the big cape that Pinturas held out to him. The people up in the stands were still talking about Morales' fight, and passing wineskins and slices of salami round, but suddenly they gasped and hushed.

In to the ring, running low and hard and fast, had come the largest and most beautiful specimen of bull that most of them had ever seen. It was jet-black and had a low rump that grew and swelled up into the high hump of tossing muscle just behind the branchlike horns. But despite the great bulk, it handled its small hoofs like a polo pony and crossed the ring just as fast.

Cayetano was behind the fence, the cape hugged to his chest, his face pale and the sweat streaming down his face. What a rotten business this was!

"All right," he called to Ruiz, the *banderillero* nearest him. "Double him for me. Let's see how he operates."

Ruiz, a flopped matador who had recently turned *banderillero*, was white and trembling visibly. "I don't go out," he said, unable to take his eyes off the bull. "I'm sorry, matador."

Cayetano cursed. He motioned to Pinturas, who was at the next *burladero*, to go out. Pinturas, his face set and hard, slid out through the *burladero* opening. He started towards the bull slowly, the cape spread out in front of him like a sail. The bull picked up its head and showed interest as Pinturas got closer. When the man was twenty feet away, the bull dropped its head and charged.

Pinturas held his ground for a long second. Then he flung the cape from him and sprinted for the fence as fast as his old legs would take him. He beat the bull by three feet and dived over head first, spilling into the passageway ludricrously. Ordinarily the crowd would have laughed, but there was no laughter now.

The third *banderillero* looked over at Cayetano and made a half-hearted move to go out, but Cayetano waved him back.

He stepped out from behind the fence and ran towards the bull that was thirty feet away, ripping up the cape that Pinturas had abandoned.

"*Toro! Toro!*" he called, as he slipped down to his knees.

The bull turned round at the voice. Cayetano flung the cape out in front of him and held it with one hand. "*Toro ah-hah-hah-hah-aaaaa!*" The staccato chant made the bull drop its head. "*Toro!*" The animal's tail shot up and it hurled itself forward. When it was eight feet away, Cayetano swung the cape over his head, the animal veered to get the flash of cloth, and the left horn grazed by his shoulder so close that it ripped off the heavy epaulet.

Then he got to his feet, and when the bull charged back, he gave the crowd a lesson in the classic *verónica* pass that they would

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never forget. The first he did ten inches away from the horn, the second eight inches away, the third three inches away. The *rebolera* that ended the series brought the bull by him so close that the side of the horn bumped his knees and nearly knocked him off balance.

During the *picadors*, Morales came out to make his *quite*, but only because the crowd yelled and jeered and called, "Where's Morales?" He tried to do the butterfly pass, but he was afraid and his fear made him clumsy. He couldn't control the bull.

On the second pass it hooked into Morales' leg and he was tossed high into the air. Instantly, Cayetano was there with a cape between the fallen man and the charging animal before it could find its target again and had skilfully led the animal away. Morales scrambled to his feet and started for the *barrera*, but the blood was going down his torn leg into his stocking and he had to be helped over the fence and carried down to the ring infirmary.

Now Cayetano was out in the centre of the ring showing them how a butterfly pass should be done, slowly, gracefully, the cape held behind his body as he walked backwards calmly and let the bull charge from side to side. It wasn't Maruja or the eighty thousand pesetas or Morales that was making him fight like this now. It was the sun and the good feel of the cape in his hands and this brave bull.

And then right in the middle of the butterfly he felt it. He felt the chilling breath on his neck first, and at the same time out of the corner of his eye he saw the slight fluttering of the flags round the ring. Suddenly he flung down the cape in terror, ran to the fence, and vaulted over. The amazed crowd sat dumbfounded for a moment. Then they began to laugh and hoot and whistle and call out derisively, "*Ola*, Cayetano the Perfect!"

He was supposed to make another *quite* but he refused to go out, and Pinturas had to take the bull away from the horse. But Cayetano couldn't escape going out with the bull for the last round.

The light wind was still blowing and he was white as he drew the sword out of the sheath that Suárez held out to him. As he walked towards the bull with the red *muleta* draped over the sword to make as big a target as possible, the wind was barely moving the cloth. Yet when the bull charged, Cayetano danced back three feet of the way instead of holding his ground.

The crowd began to stamp its feet and hoot again and a cushion sailed into the ring near him. Two more bad passes, and the boos were almost as loud as the cheers had been. On the third pass, as Cayetano stepped back out of the way of the bull, his foot slipped on the cushion and he fell back hard on to the sand. He saw the bull wheeling at the end of its charge and coming back for him. He

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saw every detail of the drooling nose, the wild eyes, the sabre horns and the gaily papered *banderillas* that dangled from the bloody shoulders. He tried to fight off the great head, kicking futilely at it with his slippered feet. Then there was a searing stab in his shoulder as the horn spiked through it.

He was lifted off the ground, tossed high into the air like a rag doll, and slammed to the sand ten feet away. He raised himself weakly on one elbow and helplessly watched the bull pawing and measuring for the next charge. This time it was charging for the kill. It couldn't miss, and there was nothing Cayetano could do about it. The sword and *muleta* were two yards out of his reach.

The bull's tail went up, its head went down, but as it started its lunge forward Cayetano saw an incredible thing happen. A gust of wind—his enemy the wind—suddenly flipped over the red *muleta*. The bull in its blind rage seemed to think it was being attacked from another quarter and it swerved away from Cayetano to hook at the *muleta*. By the time it had realized its mistake Pinturas was already out there flashing a big cape in its face, bewildering it and luring it into the centre of the ring.

Cayetano staggered to his feet. One sleeve was off and he could feel the warm blood pumping down his arm from his shoulder. The wound was nothing, he thought. A couple of days in the hospital. But thank God for the wind, or he would be a dead man now. Today was a lucky day—even the wind had become his friend today.

" Get out ! " he was yelling to his men. " Get out of the ring ! " He lurched to the *muleta* and the sword on the ground.

" Come to the infirmary, man ! " said Pinturas, from the fence.

" Get out ! " He picked up the sword and brandished it at them before adjusting it in the *muleta*. When the ring was cleared he staggered towards the bull. He stood twenty feet from it, swaying a little, and muttering to himself. " If they want tricks," he was saying, " I'll give them tricks ! " He shook the cloth. As the bull charged he dropped to his knees and spun in against the bull's shoulder. He did this for six more charges, working closer and closer until the gold of his uniform was completely smeared with the blood from the animal's shoulders.

Then he stood up and threw the big *muleta* to one side. Ten feet away from the bull he fished into the pocket in the jacket of the uniform and drew out a handkerchief. Using the handkerchief, and only the handkerchief, to keep the bull's attention away from his body, he ran straight at the animal, flung himself over the horn, and sank the sword out of sight into the charging animal. It hurtled by the man, skidded to its knees and rolled over dead.

Cayetano took out the sword and stood there over the bull,

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weaving and panting and clutching his shoulder. He raised his head and looked at the delirious crowd and Maruja. As he strode out towards the fence, people were spilling into the ring to carry him on their shoulders. He saw the *presidente* waving his handkerchief for the ears, the tail, a hoof, and still another hoof, and the wind felt good on his sweaty face.

* * *

TALL STORY

Larger than life are these outsize characters from fable and romance. Can you recognize them? Count one point for the Giant, one for the source, and one for the author in each case, making thirty in all. The answers are on page 159.

1. *Two prisoners every night for dinner was this one-eyed blacksmith's idea of good plain fare; but drink, not food, was his undoing . . .*
2. *He had found his captives asleep in the castle grounds, and there in his deep dark dungeon they lay, from Wednesday morning till Saturday night, without one bit of bread or drop of drink! Until the prisoners remembered the key—the key called "Promise"!*
3. *"What can all that green stuff be?" she said, looking down on the tree-tops, far, far below.*
4. *He lived with Hocus-Pocus the conjurer, but legerdemain was of little avail against the magic horn of the intrepid Cornishman!*
5. *Thirty or forty of these deceitful monsters, flailing their whirling arms to confound the ever luckless knight!*
6. *And the staff of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his brother also was a giant . . .*
7. *"He was, I must tell you, full seven foot high, And maybe an ell in the waste." And he could, this man of good mettle, shoot an arrow a mile or more.*
8. *On the flat roof of his castle the old giant took the air. Surely this was an insect crawling within his sleeve? He gave it a shake—!*
9. *And the mighty man with the large and sinewy hands . . .?*
10. *His toothpick was an elephant's tusk, and it needed eleven hundred cow-hides to sole his shoes! And he swallowed five pilgrims, with their staves, in his salad!*

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★*" I wish you could have met Karmesin," says his author, Gerald Kersh. " An immense old man with his air of shattered magnificence, the strong cropped skull and heavy yellowish eyes, and the vast Nietzche moustache which lay beneath his nose like a hibernating squirrel, and stirred like a living thing as he breathed upon it . . ."*

But Karmesin, the greatest criminal—or the greatest liar of all time—is no stranger to Argosy. And readers will welcome this latest reminiscence of the loquacious old story teller, for whom circumstance is but a feather in the wind.

KARMESIN AND HUMAN VANITY

by GERALD KERSH

KARMESIN was looking at himself in the mirror. The mirror measured some few square inches. Karmesin's surface measurements must have run to some almost astronomical number of square feet: he had to take four looks to see the whole of his face. He passed a hand over his cropped white head, which gave out a noise such as you might make by rubbing together two pieces of sandpaper; scowled at himself with his ponderous eyebrows, and then, with a deft gesture, divided into two parts his gigantic Nietzsche moustache and gave the ends a twirl; slapped himself in the chest, tried to look at the back of his neck, dragged down his cuffs, polished his shoes on the backs of his trouser-legs, and, in general, indulged in such an orgy of titivation that I could not help asking:

" Are you going to meet a woman, or something?"

" No. My day is finished. Observe my hair, how white it has gone. Also this moustache. There was a time when no woman could resist this moustache; a certain duchess used to tie little pieces of ribbon to the ends of it. But it is all vanity . . ."

" Bits of ribbon!" I said.

Karmesin swung round his big, plum-like eyes, and glared at me. " The trouble with you, my fine fellow," he said, " is that you are a sceptic. You believe nothing that you do not see. Therefore you are a fool. ' Seeing is believing!' Pfui, I say; and again, Pfui! It is thirty years since I last saw my own knees. So am I therefore to

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refuse to believe in them ? There is no fool quite so foolish as the sceptic, the Wise Guy. I know. I know all about fools. So listen to what I say. The greatest blockhead on earth is the clever man who thinks himself cleverer. Hence, I could extract a hundred thousand francs from a man of whom it was said : ' The banknotes trickle through his fingers like flypapers.' "

" Who was that ? "

" A man called Medved, a crook."

" How did you swindle him ? "

Karmesin chuckled. " Listen," he said.

" You might have thought," said Karmesin, " that the man was not born who could swindle Medved. There was no underhand trick that he had not thought of first. He was more slippery than a basinful of eels, and subtle with a fantastic subtlety—almost as subtle as myself. There was no dirty business with which he had not soiled his hands. He had dipped his fingers in a thousand different pockets. He was clever, and he knew it. First teach a skunk how to make a smell, then teach Medved a new trick ! Ha, it was for Karmesin to do that ; yes, *chort vozmi*, me, Karmesin, by heaven !

" He was one of those men who can both get money and keep it. He must have been a millionaire. He kept accounts. He introduced a post office atmosphere into his shady dealings. Not a stamp, not a pen-nib escaped him, and he would stay up half the night to figure out what had happened to a mislaid farthing. You cannot conceive the caution and the meanness of that man ! He would have made a Syrian pawnbroker appear like Diamond Jim Brady.

" But he had brains, and also nerve. At the same time, he was as smooth as glycerine. He looked like an octopus—he had a dirtyish pallor, no shape, evil eyes, and a beak. In shaking hands with him you felt that six or seven other hands were investigating your pockets while a dozen eyes watched you. He was feared. He made money out of everything. But he was still unknown to the police.

" I met him in Paris. I was very prosperous at this time. You could have seen me in an overcoat with a sable collar and a stud worth a thousand pounds, looking like a magnate. And it entered my mind that it would be an achievement to separate this Medved from a few of his carefully hidden thousands. I took him to Olsen's Bar, gave him champagne, and let him see that my wallet was packed with beautiful new five-hundred-franc notes. I could feel his wicked eyes crawling all over me.

" After a while he said : ' You are doing well.' I replied : ' Very well ! ' ' And might one ask which branch of business you have decorated with your unquestionable talents, Monsieur Schall ? ' I smiled, and said, quite openly : ' Undoubtedly, my dear Monsieur

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Medved, I shall be very happy to tell you. I have a mint.' He laughed. I took out my wallet, showed him its contents, and selected a five-hundred-franc note, which I threw across the table to him. " What do you think of that note ? " I asked.

" He was not the man to be deceived by a forgery. He handled the note, held it to the light, and said : ' I think it's very nice. In fact, genuine. It is genuine.' I smiled, and said : ' And what would you say if I told you that it was not ? ' ' Why, then,' he replied, ' I should say that you have found a genius of an engraver, a master of printing, and the greatest paper-maker in the world.'

" I said : ' You would be wrong. I have found no such things. One genius, yes. But that is neither here nor there. You must excuse me. I have to go.'

" ' Wait,' he said. ' This note : it is certainly genuine.' I replied : ' Keep it as a souvenir. It is not genuine. Take it into any bank. Say to the cashier : I have every reason to suspect that this note is a forgery. Have it scrutinized. And still they will pronounce it genuine ! And still the fact will remain that it was made in a hotel bedroom, in Vienna, with an apparatus not much larger than a typewriter.'

" His heart must have turned over at this, but he simply blinked, and said : ' We might do business together.' ' Forgive me,' I said, ' but there is no business that I have to discuss with you.' I gave him my card, and left him.

" As I expected, he followed me. He telephoned every day. Once or twice, I took him to dinner, always paying the bill with a new five-hundred-franc note. I let a month pass, six weeks. We talked of everything—except the apparatus not much larger than a typewriter, although his tongue was itching to discuss it. Once I showed him a German hundred-mark note ; on another occasion, a new American hundred-dollar bill. To cut it short—in the end, he begged me to tell him about it, and I did.

" The process, as I explained it to him, was simple. I did not involve myself in the innumerable technical complexities of bank-note manufacture. No. I ran no risk of detection through faulty inks or engraving. No. I had, I told him, a method of transferring the imprint of a note on to a blank sheet of paper. Hence, I could interleave blank paper and real banknotes, and, within twelve hours, double the number of the notes.

" He asked : ' And the apparatus ? '

" I told him : ' A sort of metal bath, combined with a heater and press. It is exceedingly simple.' ' May I see it, Monsieur Schall ? ' ' No, you may not, Monsieur Medved.' ' Did you invent it, Monsieur Schall ? ' ' No, not entirely. The combination of chemicals essential to the process was invented by an Austrian

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chemist who works in a dye factory. I helped to elaborate the press. The greatest difficulty is the paper, but I am able to obtain that.'

" ' And is it a costly process ? ' he asked. I told him : ' There is a certain cost. It would cost one about five shillings to duplicate five thousand notes of five-hundred francs each. What more do you want ? ' He thought for a while, and said : ' I should like to see such a machine working.' I laughed, and said : ' I find your company very pleasant, my dear Medved, but I have not yet the honour and pleasure of knowing you well enough for that ! '

" He hastened to assure me. ' My motive is not merely curiosity, Monsieur Schall. If this machine works, I would be prepared to make an offer.' ' No doubt, Monsieur Medved, but I should not be keen to sell.'

" So it went on for two weeks more. At length, I agreed to give him a demonstration, on the understanding that, if he was satisfied, he would be prepared to buy the press and the formula for two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

Karmesin laughed. I said : " But Karmesin, you're not going to tell me that you really could turn one note into two ? "

" Aren't I ? You'll see, my friend. I arranged to show Medved what my machine could do. I told him : ' Have ready at your flat one thousand new notes of a hundred German marks.' He protested : ' Why German marks ? ' ' Because the only paper I have is German bank paper, and of that, at present, I have no more than twelve hundred sheets. I'll show you whether this machine works or not ! In eight hours, I shall turn one hundred thousand marks into two hundred thousand ; in your presence, and before your very eyes.' He said : ' Very well. Be at my flat at mid-day tomorrow, with your machine, and everything else necessary. The money will be there.'

" Good. Next day, I took my machine, and went to Medved's flat—a grim and filthy place, over a grocer's shop off the Boulevard Rochehouart. I went upstairs. Medved was there, with another fellow, a sort of ape, with a broken face and tremendous shoulders, whose right hand was perpetually in his coat pocket. ' Just in case,' said Medved, very sweetly. ' Not that I distrust you. Heaven forbid. Only nothing could be easier than to knock me down and walk out with my hundred thousand marks.'

" I said to him : ' Medved, if I wanted to rob you, the last thing I should stoop to would be robbery with violence. I would swindle you if I could, yes. But knock you down ? Pfui ! ' He said : ' Let us see the machine.'

" I took it out of its case. It looked like a common black tin box. I opened it and showed Medved the inside. ' Look well,' I said, ' it is very simple. This is a sort of tank of thick glass. This top plate

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is simply a press to hold the contents down firmly. Here, as you see, is a spirit-lamp which heats the surrounding water-jacket. The entire secret of the process is in the compound which transfers the imprint of the real note to the blank paper, and with which we thoroughly moisten every note and every blank sheet before putting them into the press. I will show you, now . . .'

" I picked up the bundle of banknotes and examined them one by one. Medved's ape-man watched me so closely that his breath tickled my neck. Medved, also, was all eyes. They thought that I might perform some trick of legerdemain, and palm a few notes. Fools! Fools, to rest so confident in their own knowledge of low crime!

" I damped every note and every sheet of paper, and built up a neat pile composed of alternate banknotes and blanks. The smell of the secret compound was preposterous—it conveyed memories of ancient battlefields in hot sunlight, questionable eggs, and the odour of the fish that goes into the Cafe Nouilles in wooden boxes, which makes even strong fish-porters unwell—and mingling with it came the ape-man's breath, charged with garlic and Brie cheese and brandy.

" It was not by any means a garden of roses. Still, I built up my tower of beautiful new notes and nice clean paper, and then wrapped it in strong vellum, which I carefully sealed.

" ' Watch,' I said, ' I now place the parcel in the press. I tighten the clips . . . one, two, three, four. Good. Now I light this spirit-lamp, and very firmly close the lid. Now we wait.'

" ' How long ? ' ' Four hours. The temperature must be kept at about eighty-eight centigrade. After that it must be allowed to cool slowly for another four hours. Then we open the parcel, and your money is doubled.'

" Medved paced the room. ' It seems too good to be true,' he said, ' but if the worst comes to the worst, I shall have lost only eight or nine hours of time. Pedro, stand guard over that machine! ' Pedro took from his bulging pocket an indescribably sinister revolver. Then we waited. Medved smoking cigars; Pedro picking his nails.

" Two hours passed. I fussed with the thermometer. Three hours passed. The atmosphere was tense. Four hours. ' Ten more seconds', I said, looking at my watch—' One . . . two . . . three . . . four . . . five . . . six . . . seven . . . eight . . . nine . . . ten—open up! ' and I tore off the lid and pulled out the bundle, steaming and hot. ' Blankets! ' I shouted, ' Blankets! ' Medved tore three thick blankets off his bed, and we wrapped the parcel in them and put it in front of the fire.

" ' Pedro, guard that parcel! ' Pedro squatted over the parcel

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like a cannibal guarding a victim. Another hour passed. 'Is all this waiting essential?' 'Yes, it is. Let that bundle cool too quickly, and you'll get only half an impression, and the money will be spoiled, too. Besides, the paper must also dry slowly. You must have patience.' Medved helped himself to another cigar. An hour and a half more went by. I began to manifest signs of nervousness. I paced the room, biting my nails.

"Footsteps sounded in the passage. Pedro rose, and cocked his revolver. Medved went over to his bundle of money and prepared to defend it with his life. The footsteps passed. We all sighed with relief.

I locked up my little machine and put it back in its case, together with all the little bottles. 'Another half-hour to go.' 'Thank God,' said Medved.

"And at that moment, there was a thunderous knocking at the door—heavy truncheons; we all recognized the sound—an unmistakable voice roared, 'Open this door! In the name of the law!' I had hysterics. 'The money!' I said to Medved, in a terrible whisper. 'Hold it! Guard it! Don't open it! It will all be spoiled!' He clutched it to his bosom. Then I said: 'My God, the machine!'

"'Open that door or we break it down!' shouted the police. I seized the machine, and rushed out by the fire-escape. 'Guard the money with your life!' I shouted. Just then the panels of the door began to crack. Ho-ho-ho!"

Karmesin stopped for breath.

"Well?" I asked.

"Well! What do you think? When Medved opened his parcel, he found two thousand neat pieces of newspaper. I found a hundred thousand marks—very damp and malodorous, it is true, but very acceptable. It was the oldest trick in the world—switching similar parcels. Bah, fools!"

"But the police?"

"Police? They were three men whom I had employed to come in at the moment. But Medved did not realize that until he opened the parcel. Then he saw that he, Medved, the fox, had been taken in by an ancient swindle and a common Chinese-puzzle cabinet. He could do nothing, not even complain to the police. But it shows you how, by means of an atmosphere, you can get even blood out of a stone. It all goes to show the folly of human vanity."

★*Another story of the amazing Karmesin next month, "Karmesin and the Unbeliever" by GERALD KERSH, in your JUNE ARGOSY.*

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HURRICANE WEDDING

"It would be irregular," said Father Anthony, thoughtfully, "but highly irregular!"

by DOROTHY COTTRELL

JEAN MAREO, great-bodied young Negro of the little Island of the Most Holy Sabbath of the Sainted Mother of God, moved through the sunset forest at the striding run which, with minor interruptions, he had maintained since noon, and even he, the strongest runner of Caribbee, experienced an increasing trembling of exhaustion and the burning ache of rebellion in his straining calves and thighs. Low in the west the black clouds had parted, and in the unearthly light of a hurricane sunset which turned the sky into a distant furnace and the sea to a semblance of molten metal whose reflections splashed flame into the darkening jungle, he was alternately a part of the shadows and a running bronze stained in fire.

The sweat of his rhythmically labouring chest glittered as did the dark foliage drenched by the last wild shower, while the harsh sound of his breathing held something of the still restrained violence of the gusts that tossed the jungle roof to a roar of leaves and as abruptly ceased. For as yet there was little sustained wind, merely a vast restlessness of the air, the shock of whose pulsations touched the island and were gone, their menace revealed only by their vastness that reached from sky to sky. And at their going the island seemed to crouch like a deer under the playing paw of a black panther.

In all the world, there was the sense of a great thing to be; the urgency of time that was running out.

Jean Mareo knew, *Soon the wind will come.*

He was thankful that he had almost finished his duties as one of the official "hurricane warners" of the island—duties that were very heavy in an island populated almost entirely by women and children whose men were at sea and by old men too weak to be of aid—for he had still to board up his own house and bring in his pigs and goats. Since the Good Father at the Mission had given out the noon advisory in which they were told to prepare for disaster as the mighty march of the hurricane was now towards them, he, Jean Mareo, had half circled the island, warning both the villages

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and the isolated wood-choppers' camps in the jungle; he had helped Grannie Jameson board up her home, while she compared his work continually and unfavourably with that of her late husband.

He had found Widow Jones' cow placidly eating moonflowers and studying the view from a beach that would certainly be swept by tidal wave. He had helped Sister Frances gather the children into the school building and had seen that they were supplied with water and lamps, food and blankets, and had personally searched the persons of small boys for hidden catapults. He had aided old men in the lashing of boats and stowing of skiffs, doing all things carefully and well, and still he had been in good time as he reported at the Mission where the Good Father, with gown tucked up, was expertly cutting hardwood posts to shore the doors of the hospital.

"Ah, Mareo!" Father Anthony had said, wiping his forehead. "I must ask you to run to South Point—the South Warner broke his leg and has just crawled out of the jungle to say that he did not get through to them!" Seeing the consternation in Jean Mareo's dark face, he asked, "What is it, my son?"

"It is of no moment, Good Father," Jean Mareo said quickly. "The distance is not far and I will be back in time to board my house."

"I am sorry, my son!" Father Anthony called after him.

The Reverend Mother, hurriedly transferring containers of plasma from the refrigerators to the cistern—the safest place if they were "swept"—gave Jean Mareo her ruddy-faced smile as he passed her.

"You will meet Therese on the path where she is bringing in the children from the Gipsy camp," the Reverend Mother said, kneeling massively to lower the bottles into the water. "And her father is a wool-headed fool to think of marrying her to the Postmaster when she might have you!"

"If I can but save my home, I have hope that he may yet say yes," Jean Mareo said, and handed her another rack of containers and ran on.

"It is strange that anywhere in the world we still associate quality with a white skin!" the Reverend Mother said, hurrying past Father Anthony.

Alone, Jean Mareo tightened his lips, glanced at the clouds that swung in a mighty arc above the jungle, and, for all his weariness, increased his speed. Years of hope and the happiness of two lives hung on his being back in time to board his house! He must not betray Therese because his heart shook his labouring chest and his breath was a pain in his burning throat!

To be sure that he did not fail, he thought of Therese and felt

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his love for her in every fibre of his body. It was a warm thing that made his body more than itself, so that his body became a means of serving her. His great hands grew gentle at the thought of touching her. His feet would tread steadily after the plough in the stony fields if they trod for her. The greatness of his shoulders would have meaning if their strength could carry water from the cistern to save her strength. He would put his body between her and all danger of a savage world! If she might be his wife, it seemed to him that his body would become a thing of glory unbelievable.

His mind could not recall a time when he had not loved her. In memory, he saw her as a little girl intent on her fishing; felt himself a great, bronze lad in clean shirt and trousers with a little girl's hand tucked confidingly in his as he led her to church; knew the times in distant ports when he had stood before shop windows tempted by new boots, but instead had bought a doll or a package of candy to bring wonder to a little girl's eyes.

Now she was a young woman with the soft and beautiful speech of the Negroes of the islands and eyes that he thought were like dark lilies. To be away from her was to ache, to look upon her was to be feasted, to touch her fingers was to tremble and feel music. Because of the stern morality of the island, he had never kissed her, but he had thought that if his mouth once met hers he might not live, but might die as the purple bees died in the golden air on their nuptial flight.

On the other hand, if she was never his wife, he knew that he could not live! Should there never be a wedding night for them, all the world would be empty, though it held all other things. Should she never be his, he would be as a man holding in his hand good seed, but forbidden to plant it in the warm earth, or as a strong ship that might never know the union with the sea. His life would be a nothing, his flesh futile. Could they but be one with each other, all the world would be given them. Having all joy of earth, he could surely conquer the earth! . . . Though it was very hard for a man to conquer the earth and its poverty in the islands, particularly when there was the Old One, the grandmother, who must have milk and many things, and the Small Ones the brothers, who must have milk and whose needs were even greater.

For his house, Mareo had had to save five years, doing without tobacco and mending his clothes by lamplight until little of the original fabric remained, buying nails in sixpennyworths, and two hinges for the door after eating only one meal a day for two months. But now, at least, the house was almost finished. He had only to be sure of being back in time to board the doors and windows.

At the intersection with the path to the Gipsy Camp, he heard

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the approach of Therese and the children and wheeled off to meet them, standing before her in his tattered shorts. She, too, was breathing hard with haste. He said, " Do not delay in reaching the Mission, Therese! Be in shelter before the wind comes! I have only to warn the South Point and board the house and I will be with you." He held her beautiful face for an instant between his hands. " You do not have to go out again ? "

" Only to Granny Trujillo. She would not come with the boy for her hen was hatching." Her hands held his naked shoulders as she looked up at him. " Be careful yourself, Jean Mareo! Do not take any foolish risks! "

His mouth curved in a smile. " I will not! I will be so cowardly that you will be ashamed to be seen companioning me! "

She reached up and kissed him quickly, and he ran back to the main path while she gathered the children.

The kiss was new strength on his mouth, but also a shock of terror in a world where the heart cares so desperately for some other heart whose beating is so vulnerable a thing. Lovers who parted in approaching storms might never see each other again. If something should befall her, he would go to the garden and she would not be in the garden. He would look in the wash-shed and she would not be in the wash-shed with the soap bubbles on her arms. He would not touch her hand again or see her being kind with the little cildren!

Or suppose he did not get the house boarded—and it blew down—and her father carried out his threat to marry her to the Postmaster, a self-opinionated, fat and elderly black man, but very rich because his high office brought in all of forty dollars a year! That would be worse, for Therese and he, Jean Mareo, would both be in the world, but there would never be their wedding night. And thinking of her married to the Postmaster, who might be unkind to her, he missed his step and came down on his knees on the coral so that blood ran down his shins as he hurried to his feet again. He knew, *I must not think like that or I will neither board my house nor warn the people!*

About him now the fantastic light lay in bars of flame between the great trunks, so that the dead leaves seemed coals of fire, and on the green leaves the light was blots of blood. Then, breaking from the forest on to the Long Beach, he felt the measured tramp of the hurricane swells and had to shade his eyes against the infernal light as he stared into the blaze of sea and sky.

It seemed that the world was burning out and that with final darkness the light could never come again! Or as if the world was bleeding to its death. Even the great swells were crimsoned through their clearness in which one saw the darting shadows of

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fish against the light . . . Then all the flame had deepened from fire to crimson and a wildly crying flight of birds swept into the dark jungle.

Only the echo of afterglow pinkened the rising smoke of the cooking fires as he entered the village of South Point, and shadow was thick amongst the polished leaves of the breadfruit trees and upon the round, bronze and purple cheeks of avocadoes. The interiors of the many coloured houses were dark and rich with scents of stewing turtle meat, garlic, onions, coconut and toasting cassava cakes, and where the black women in pink and white and lilac dresses stooped over the yard fires or knelt before the stone ovens, the great night seemed to be putting its arms about them. Children chirped like birds in the lanes, cluttered with double rose hibiscus flowers and pink cabbage roses and black crotons, while through the trees the yellow banana birds still flitted, though it was past their bedtime.

Jean Mareo had no breath for individual conversations, but made instead for the church, stepping over a goat and lifting a fat, brown baby from his way at the door. Grasping the bell-rope, he sent the notes of the ancient bell falling into the wild dusk like floating and majestic drops of its bronze self. And from everywhere came the sounds of the people speaking in low voices as they hurried towards the church.

Jean Mareo went out on to the steps, and, in the little space, the light had failed so that one could no longer tell if the hibiscus flowers were rose or black, and he had to strain his eyes to see the people.

He said in his deep voice, " The Good Father has word from the weather bureau that the storm has turned towards us. Full hurricane will be upon us in perhaps an hour. Board up your homes ! Take your children and your old ones to the high land ! Do all that you may do, and do it quickly, for the Good Father warns that this is a great storm and the sea may sweep us ! I must go now, and may God be with you ! "

There was no panic, for these were sea people, but a slight sound of sadness brushed the night as women clasped their sleeping babies, as pregnant women involuntarily put their hands against their bodies as if to shield their unborn children against the greatness of the violence to come. Men and women sighed that, at best, the richness and scent and simple plenty would tomorrow lie beaten and wrecked ; the fat sugarcane, a trampled wickerwork ; the loaded fruit trees, shattered winrows in which salt-saturated avocadoes and parsnip-sweet breadfruit rotted with the rotting oranges and limes ; the cool cisterns, brackish with seawater ; the

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fat flocks of chickens and ducks, still balls of feathers or scattered wanderers in the jungles.

Good houses, well boarded, might survive, but they would be paintless and battered and crowded with the less fortunate home owners whose houses were down. Of the people who had been about to eat rich soups and crisp cakes, of the children who had been drifting home for their warm goats' milk and fried grits and boiled Guinea eggs, a certain number would never know another meal at evening. At worst, if there was a true "rise of the sea," the island might lie silent, for great cities have ceased to be and rich provinces lain barren in the wake of the tidal waves of hurricane.

As the soft sound of sadness died, courteous voices thanked him from the darkness. "Our thanks, Jean Mareo!" "If you would care to spend the storm with us, Jean Mareo, our house is strong." "You must hunger, Jean Mareo! The soup is ready. I will bring it ere you could move!"

He answered, "I thank you, but I must return to Old Town. My house is yet to be boarded." He hesitated as his young stomach cried of the twelve hours since he had eaten. "If one has it to spare, I might carry with me a coconut of soup?"

"Rest on the steps, Jean Mareo! It will be with you!"

His sitting down was a mistake, for he suddenly felt that he could never get up again. Already from far and near came the sound of hammering and the wavering gleam of torches and lesser but steadier lights of lanterns moved hurriedly. Already, families carrying furniture, young goats and bunches of chickens were streaming past towards the high ground. Then a young woman put into his hands a coconut shell full of fine soup, delicate with coconut and sliced carrots, and another woman was offering him crisp and toasted cassava cakes buttered with coconut cream.

He got swaying to his feet. "My thanks! I will eat as I go."

"Good fortune, Jean Mareo!" the women said. "May your house hold, Jean Mareo!" And he was running through the returning drift of rain as the forest rushed and bent to the first gust of great wind. But the soup and cakes helped him, and he felt stronger and full of hope that he could still board his house in time. Even though the black forest roared, there would still be considerable time in which a strong man could handle boards without their breaking his arms or stunning him. For Therese he would be very strong!

He had taken a torch from the church, and the wavering flare showed the jungle path, unfamiliar now because the rising hurricane-tide was creeping across it in small pools and eddies of clear water on which the dead leaves floated, and the great, pale land-crabs were moving inland with a sort of sideward dance and much waving

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and clashing of large claws. In places, the crabs were so crowded that he had to tread amongst them, and they scrambled over his feet and frothed and hissed at him angrily.

The wind had dropped again as he reached the beach, but the beach itself was inundated and he splashed through the warm tide while the long-spaced hurricane swells washed to his hips as they rolled past him, to lose themselves bubblingly in the jungle. Suddenly he stopped and stared seawards, unable to believe what he saw.

In the tremendous darkness over the outer reef, someone was fishing with torch and spear! At the moment, the flame of the torch rose straight upwards in the ominous stillness and its light trailed long reflections. At any moment it might be blotted out for ever. Jean Mareo waved his own torch and shouted with all the volume of his young lungs, "Ahoy! Come ashore! The hurricane is upon us!" The dimly visible figure continued its fishing. "Ahoy yonder! The hurricane comes!" Jean Mareo bellowed. There was no response; the toylike figure, with its back towards him, remained stooped above the tiny circle of luminous water.

With sinking heart, Jean Mareo realized that it must be Old Timothy and that he did not believe there would be a storm, since it was not in the Almanac. The old man was deaf as a coconut and obstinate as many donkeys. And if he stayed out there, the off-shore wind might at any instant prevent his getting back to the island. Only by a miracle had he not already been swept to sea!

Jean Mareo stood very still . . . He was not responsible for the old man's obstinacy. For five days, the Good Father had held the island under hurricane alert as the storm had "drifted" and its tremendous wheel had gained in girth. No man save Timothy would have gone fishing from a small boat on such a night as this, even without any warning save that of the savage sky. Yet if the old man stayed there he would be whirled away, drowned in the black and shrieking smother of the storm.

It was a terrible thing to die alone in the sea in hurricane! Yet it would be a terrible thing if his, Jean Mareo's, house blew down—as it surely would if he did not board it before the hurricane came! He had done enough; more than his duties called for. There was no way of reaching Timothy save by swimming, and no one would expect him to do so insane a thing as to swim out through shark infested waters to the outer reef under impending hurricane! And yet he could not go on and leave the old fool there to certain death. He would keep thinking about Old Timothy,

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afraid in the final disaster which obstinacy had brought upon him, helpless before the cruel sea.

Running to the vine-covered sandbank at the edge of the beach, he forced the haft of the torch into the sand so that the flame was held upright, jerked off his shorts and tied them to a stump, crossed himself hurriedly, then waded out into the warm, dark water across which the light of his torch struck rosily. The scent of the island seemed to call him back.

When the water reached his waist, he slid into it and began to swim through the stillness that was more ominous than the wind. "Haste!" it said. "There is little time—and even that has almost gone!" Swimming, he felt that he had betrayed Therese who would be aiding the Reverend Mother and innocently confident that he was boarding the house that was their hope. If he was not drowned or attacked by some sea thing, he did not know how he could face Therese and tell her that he had not boarded the house!

Far ahead, Timothy's torch gleamed as the old man looked for crawfish. The distance seemed much longer, now that Jean Mareo was in the water. And many things could happen. At any moment, the returning wind might change the tepid, oil-smoothness about him to choking vapour, in which the strongest swimmer would drown. Or he might reach the boat, but the wind be such that he could not win back to shore. Worst, perhaps, the torch on the beach might go out and he might not be able to tell where the island was. He tried to keep his mind away from the thought of the sharks who occupied the sea with him, but he was unpleasantly aware of the depths beneath him and of the sea's unseen life. At times the endless flight of little fish peppered against his body; sometimes he felt the passing of larger fish, and once a quick fin brushed his flesh.

Then he was within fifty feet of the boat. He steadied his body in the water and shouted, "Timothy! The hurricane comes! It is I, Jean Mareo!" The old man did not hear him. From far across the island, Jean Mareo's ears caught the advancing sound of a great shower. He swam on towards the boat, and only when he was within the light of the old man's torch did he pause to shout again. "Timothy! Ahoy! Let me aboard!"

This time the old man heard and whirled, grasping his spear, his old face and straggling beard wild in the torchlight. "Sea thing, get back to the sea!" he shrilled, poising the spear in his old arms. "Get a-clear!"

The shower was trampling across the jungle, and Jean Mareo almost wept with exasperation. "It is I, Jean Mareo! The storm comes! Let me aboard while we can get ashore!"

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"Get a-clear!" Old Timothy yelled, shaking the spear. Jean Mareo trod water. He had no time to argue, yet, for all Timothy's age, he was very dangerous while armed with the three-pronged grain—which he was obviously ready to use in defence against the merman.

Jean Mareo's flesh crawled slightly at the thought of the grain striking it; through the shoulder, perhaps, disabling his arm, or into the muscles of his back, where it would cling as he had seen spears cling in great fish. And obviously he could neither convince Timothy of his identity nor impress the old man with the imminence of danger. As Timothy made a brandishing threat with the spear, Jean Mareo fled back beyond the limits of the torchlight, and the old man cackled in glee.

Watching the old man peer for him, Jean Mareo breathed deeply for a moment, then dived down into the darkness, as far as his arms could force his body. Beneath the water, he swam towards the boat. And as he swam the small of his back shrank from the possible down-leap of the spear . . . He must be dimly visible to the old man if he looked below, and must count on Timothy's continuing to watch the surface where Jean Mareo had vanished . . . The spear had a twelve-foot handle and could reach deep!

His lungs were bursting as he neared the shadow cast by the boat into the torchlit water. Then he was beneath the boat—and he shot upwards, raising his hands to strike palm-flat where the starboard side of the boat curved upwards. His hands made contact, and he heaved mightily. The boat lurched, there was a stumbling within it, a yell, audible even through the water, a wild splashing—and he knew that Timothy had fallen overboard.

Breaking water, Jean Mareo dragged himself into the veering boat, reached over the port side and grasped the spluttering Timothy by the collar. As he got his breath, he hauled the old man in while Timothy wept and struggled weakly to escape. Hating to do it, Jean Mareo knocked him out and laid him securely in the bottom of the boat and then grasped the great sculling oar. As he did so, he looked shorewards, and fear like a physical pang struck him in the chest.

The torch on the beach was out, and the roar of great rain was coming towards him! In a moment, the tremendous rain was all about the boat and he was uncertain of his direction. The torch in the boat went out also, and in absolute darkness he tried to gauge the faint slant of the almost vertically falling rain which was his only indication of the direction of the island. When he believed that the rain was washing more violently down his face than down the back of his neck, he set out using the sweep with all his force and praying that he was not sculling seawards or on such an angle

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that he would never reach the island.

As he went, he tried to calculate distance, and strained to hear the surge of the swells on the drowned beach. But there was only black rain hurting his eyes and running into his mouth and down his body, to set Timothy's crawfish awash in the unseen bottom of the boat. His anxiety mounted as the moments passed and the boat failed to reach shore. Yet he believed that his direction was right, for, from infinite distance, and reaching from sky to sky before him, he seemed now to hear a faint but endless rumble that he thought was the sound of the storm itself. It was a thing more felt than heard—as yet hardly audible to the keenest ears—yet perhaps the most menacing sound in the world. And somewhere between him and it there lay the island . . .

His arms, sweeping the scull back and forth, seemed to have maintained their sweeping for endless time, when suddenly the boat lurched and stranded. He grasped Timothy and sprang ashore, to blunder into the drenched jungle. The blessedness of escape from the sea on to the firmness of the island was an elemental joy of union. Then he got the old man over his shoulder and staggered through waist-deep water along the beach.

As he reached the forest, the wind began to rise. Finding the entrance to the path and keeping on the path was very difficult, and the thundering roar of wind was now punctuated by the whistling snap of branches and the crash of falling trees. The wind was a scream, a howl, an endless rumble as if all the freight trains of all the world were riding the black night!

As he emerged from the forest into the sweet potato fields about the Mission, the wind caught him like a great pain. It tore at his eyelashes, hurt his ears, confused him and choked his breathing so that he opened his mouth to gasp, and the wind blew down his throat and hurt his lungs. For all his strength and Old Timothy's weight, he could not maintain firm contact with the earth, and reeled like a reed in the torrent of air. Beneath his clutching fingers the ground was flying as driven sand. For the last quarter mile he crawled with the old man tied across his back by a length of twine. Sand and flying pebbles flailed him as he crawled. His hands had to keep feeling for the little indentation of the path.

Reaching the shelter of the downwind wall of the Mission was escape from torment, and he was suddenly without the strength to climb the steps, but sat drooping in the little pool of calmness while the night roared about it and the stone steps trembled to the trembling of the earth under the impact of the air. Old Timothy was coming to, and Jean Mareo knew that he should get him into the hospital, but for a moment he could only bend trembling as the island bowed and trembled. His heart ached so that his head

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hung forwards, and he was even unaware of the fact that he was naked. For the house was lost, and with it all the dreams . . .

Sitting there, he knew that perhaps they had been only dreams, for even with the house it could never have been that Therese's father would have let her marry him, a poor man. He was crushed by the loss of hope and tired with the weight of years in which a man toils to no purpose. Suddenly, Therese was kneeling behind him with her arms locked about his wet shoulders.

She sobbed, " Oh, Jean Mareo ! Jean Mareo ! I thought you were dead in the storm ! "

He put up his hand and rested it sadly over hers. " I did not board the house—and perhaps it makes little difference, for it was in truth but a poor house, and your father would never have consented, for I have little to give you."

" I do not care for the house—what is a house ? I love you with one board more than all other men with many houses ! You are good and kind, Jean Mareo, and I love you; and we will find a way ! "

" I could not dishonour you by taking you without marriage, Therese. And your father will never consent, and the Good Father would not marry us without your father's word, and I may not leave the island because of the grandmother, the Old One, and the brothers, the Small Ones." He held her hand again against his shoulder. " I am very tired. Perhaps you would get me clothing so that I may carry in the Old Timothy ? "

Clothed, he carried Old Timothy into the hospital ward and explained what had happened. " I did not wish to hit him, but there was no choosing." Standing grave in his blue shirt and clean work trousers, he asked, " Is there anything more with which I may give aid ? "

The Reverend Mother raised her ruddy face from the old man's chest. " He is all right. No, there is nothing more."

Jean Mareo found a place by the wall of the main room and sat very still, with his great hands clasped between his knees. The lamplight gleamed on the close wool of his bowed head and the greatness of his shoulders under the clean blue shirt. He could not bear to look at Therese as she worked amongst the children. After a time, the Reverend Mother, who moved quietly amongst the people, came up to him and asked, " Are you ill, my son ? "

He raised his desolate young face. " No, Reverend Mother."

" That was a brave thing you did, Jean Mareo . . . What is troubling you ? "

" My house, Reverend Mother. I had no time to board it."

The Reverend Mother was aware of all the connotations of this. She patted his woolly head with a quick hand. Then she passed

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through the trembling buildings, held in the ever rising roar of hurricane. Opening the door of the weather room, she stood for a moment watching Father Anthony who regarded the barometer with extreme interest and alarmed astonishment. Having made sure of the reading, he went to the desk and added a careful notation to his record of the storm.

Quoting from a not infrequent notation in the weather bureau's histories of hurricanes, the Reverend Mother said dryly, " ' *The records of this storm in its passage over the island are of particular interest, although, unfortunately, they are incomplete, as the observer was swept away.*' " She went up to the desk. " How bad is it going to be ? "

" Very bad—one of the ' great ' . . . I have never seen anything like this. We are still hours from the peak—and look at the glass ! "

The old friends regarded each other thoughtfully, and the Reverend Mother smiled. " Can you leave your barometer long enough to perform a marriage ceremony ? " She put her hand on his arm. " They are such good children ! He has worked seven years for her—and his house has gone because he saved the old man ! If we get through this, her father will never consent . . ."

" It would be highly irregular ! And you know that I do not approve of marriage without the consent of the parents."

The Reverend Mother moved to the storm chart on the wall. " So it is likely that there will be a rise of the sea ? "

" Unless there is a miracle."

Tidal wave is something with which human preparation cannot contend ; there is safety then only in height, and the island's greatest elevation above sea level was forty feet : a fact which the Reverend Mother's broad back managed to convey. She repeated, " Such good children."

Father Anthony said, " It would be highly irregular . . ." He glanced at the falling glass, at the climbing velocity recorded on the anemometer dials, then his very bright eyes under their time-wearied lids met the Reverend Mother's sharply as she turned. " In any case, my dear old friend, the only practical gift at the moment is a higher barometer, and that I cannot give them ! "

The Reverend Mother stood flat-footed and portly. " Then give an impractical gift to me ! Our friendship does go over a good many years, and I have not, I think, asked many things. As for what you can give them, you can give them a little hour of ' yes ' ! All their life has been ' no ' ! ' No ' to going into the white man's world. ' No ' to going into the rich countries. ' No ' to working the poor earth—for others own the earth. ' No ' to everything young and tender, because they lacked such pathetically little money. ' No ' to life—for pennies ! . . . If we die tomorrow,

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you can have given them their little miracle of 'yes.'"

"It is still against my rules! I have never spoken service without parental consent!" He hesitated, looking at the glass.

The Reverend Mother also looked and raised her grizzled eyebrows. She murmured absently, "'Much may be done by those about to die . . .'"

He smiled thoughtfully. "'. . . much may be said by lips that say goodbye'? Your reading is unbecomingly wide—and you have always been able to trick me into capping a quote!" He looked at the barometer. "Bring your young ones here, obstinate woman!"

As the young people rose from their knees after the ceremony, the Reverend Mother gestured that they should follow her, and led the way down one of the trembling passages. At its end, she removed a key from the clip at her belt. "This is the key to the store room. It is as safe as any of the other buildings. I have set a little supper on the table—and some of Father Anthony's special wine and some of Sister Frances' secret plum cake. Good night, my children."

The lantern filled the small room that was piled with dried reeds for the basket weaving with warm, golden light, and here, too, the air and the earth were filled with the rumble and tremble of the wind so that the room seemed a little ship flying down a sea of air. Jean Mareo looked down into Therese's soft face and his hands gently and wonderingly touched her shoulders while her dark fingers rested on his blue shirt. The impact of the wind shook the stones under the dry rushes beneath their feet, yet the room seemed safer than any place that he had ever known.

Suddenly he was no longer weary either with the weariness of the years of waiting or of the long day. Incredulously, he tried to express it to her. "All things are in this room, Therese!"

She answered, "All the great storm is but the walls of this room!"

* * *

NEW LIGHT

In the Soviet Union there is no mystical or obscure treatment of love, such as decadent cosmopolitan poets use. We sing of how a young man falls in love with a girl because of her big industrial output.

STEPHAN PETROVIV, *Soviet Poet*

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PRESENT COMPANY EXCEPTED

I do not love thee, Doctor Fell :
The reason why I cannot tell ;
But this I know, and know full well :
I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.

THOMAS BROWN, 1663–1704

Between Ourselves

There were very few beauties, and such as there were not very handsome. Miss Iremonger did not look well, and Mrs. Blount was the only one much admired. She appeared exactly as she did in September, with the same broad face, diamond bandeau, white shoes, pink husband and fat neck. The two Miss Coxes were there : I traced in one the remains of the vulgar, broad-featured girl who danced at Enham eight years ago. The General has got the gout, and Mrs. Maitland the jaundice. Miss Debary, Susan, and Sally, all in black, but without any statues, made their appearance, and I was as civil to them as circumstances would allow me.

JANE AUSTEN, *in a letter to her sister, November*, 1800

Honourable Mention

An English writer who has been negotiating for the translation into Japanese of one of his books has just received the following letter from a firm of publishers in Tokyo :

" *We have read your work with inexpressible pleasure. We swear to you on the sacred memory of our ancestors that we have never before had occasion to read such an admirable masterpiece. If we publish it his Majesty the Emperor will insist on its being a model for us and will not permit us to publish any work inferior to yours. This would make it impossible for us to continue in business until at least* 10,000 *years have passed. We are therefore constrained to refuse your divine work and to deposit it at your feet, trembling meanwhile at the thought of the severe judgement we shall receive from all future generations for having given way to such a criminal action.*"

A rejection slip that the most sensitive author might be pleased to receive.

PETERBOROUGH, in *The Daily Telegraph*

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Pistols for Two?

Mr. James Macpherson—I have received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall never be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the publick which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

SAMUEL JOHNSON, 1709–1784, *in a letter*

Beyond the Pale

Remote and ineffectual Don
That dared attack my Chesterton,
With that poor weapon, half-impelled,
Unlearnt, unsteady, hardly held,
Unworthy for a tilt with men—
Your quavering and corroded pen;
Don poor at Bed and worse at Table,
Don pinched, Don starved, Don miserable . . .
Don here-and-there, Don epileptic;
Don puffed and empty, Don dyspeptic;
Don middle-class, Don sychophantic,
Don dull, Don brutish, Don pedantic;
Don hypocritical, Don bad,
Don furtive, Don three-quarters mad;
Don (since a man must make an end),
Don that shall never be my friend.

HILAIRE BELLOC

Good Tidings

When the news of Napoleon's death came, before the King had been informed of it by his Ministers, Sir E. Nagle, anxious to communicate the welcome tidings, said to him, "Sir, your bitterest enemy is dead." "Is she, by God!" said the tender husband.

HENRY EDWARD FOX, *Journal*, 1821

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Your Servant, Ma'am!

O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much?
O fat white woman whom nobody loves,
Why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
When the grass is soft as the breast of doves
And shivering-sweet to the touch?
O why do you walk through the fields in gloves,
Missing so much and so much?

FRANCES CORNFORD

Insult!

"I shall go as a bandit," interrupted Mr. Tupman.

"What!" said Mr. Pickwick, with a sudden start.

"As a bandit," repeated Mr. Tupman, mildly.

"You don't mean to say," said Mr. Pickwick, gazing with solemn sternness at his friend, "You don't mean to say, Mr. Tupman, that it is your intention to put yourself into a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail?"

"Such is my intention, sir," replied Mr. Tupman warmly. "And why not, sir?"

"Because, sir," said Mr. Pickwick, considerably excited, "Because you are too old, sir."

"Too old!" exclaimed Mr. Tupman.

"And if any further ground of objection be wanting," continued Mr. Pickwick, "you are too fat, sir."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, his face suffused with a crimson glow, "This in an insult."

"Sir," replied Mr. Pickwick in the same tone, "It is not half the insult to you, that your appearance in my presence in a green velvet jacket, with a two-inch tail, would be to me."

"Sir," said Mr. Tupman, "you're a fellow."

"Sir," said Mr. Pickwick, "you're another!"

CHARLES DICKENS, 1812–1870, *The Pickwick Papers*

Wishful Thinking

You came and quacked beside me in the wood.
You said, "The view from here is very good!"
You said, "It's nice to be alone a bit!"
And, "How the days are drawing out!" you said.
You said, "The sunset's pretty, isn't it?"

By God! I wish—I wish that you were dead!

RUPERT BROOKE, 1887–1915

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LOVE ME LITTLE, LOVE ME LONG

Could this be a trap, set especially for him?

by H. E. BATES

HE stood looking down the field, across treeless hedges of old hawthorn, away from her. He did not want to look at her face. He felt transfixed by the dead leaves of many primroses in the dyke, burnt to brown skeletons by the drought of summer.

"You could often come over and see us," she said. "Come next week. We shall be having a shoot one day."

"I don't shoot," he said.

"But you could come over. Now that you live so close again."

He did not speak. He was thinking of how, in the spring, so many primroses would have been very beautiful all along the dykes, under creamy arches of hawthorn.

"The boys are wonderful shots," she said. "Better than their father."

Now from the rise at the end of the field he could see the farm, clustered cubes of cream stone and straw lying at the end of slopes of pasture, grouped about by coppered chestnut trees.

He looked at his watch.

"You don't have to go," she said. "Not yet."

"I really ought."

"You come over specially to see me and then before I can bat an eyelid, you're off again. It's hardly fair. After all this time—"

"It was just a call," he said.

"Yes, but it's hardly fair," she said. "I mean—"

She had stopped by the gate and now she was leaning on it, arms triangular on the top bar. She was much bigger, he noticed, than she used to be, the flesh of her neck rather heavy, arms ripe and brown, breasts shapeless and cushioned under thick brown lapels of tweed. But her eyes were still very brilliant, egg-blue and clear, and now, for the first time, they looked straight at him.

"If you must go, then promise you'll come over on Tuesday," she said. "You can do that."

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"I really ought not—"

"It's so like you," she said. Her voice was neither sharp nor gentle. "You start a thing and then half way through you want to give it up."

He did not know what to say.

"You see, you don't say anything. You know it's true."

"All right." He smiled.

"Do you mean all right it's true?" she said, "or do you mean all right you'll come over?"

He put his hand on the latch of the gate, ready to open it, but she pressed the whole weight of her body against it, defying him, holding it shut. And suddenly he found himself pressed against her, his legs melting across her thighs, one hand still on the cold latch of the gate, the other on her warm neck.

"Oh! God," she said.

Presently he opened the gate and she did not protest, and he walked across the field in a daze. Bright cloud, spilt milkily across the evening sky, intensified the low sunlight so that it dazzled him like white fire. He held his hand to his face and suddenly, at the same moment, across the next field, there was the sound of shooting. It startled him so much that he stopped.

"It's the boys," she said. "After pigeons."

She stopped too. For a moment he was going on, but she held him back by the arms, turning him round so that her body was flat against him.

"They're really awfully good," she said. "Pigeons are almost the most difficult thing of all."

"Are they?"

"Almost."

She began kissing him as shots rang out again across the field, but now she did not seem to notice them and they did not startle him. She kissed him in a series of little gulps, her lips hardened and quick and then suddenly softened across his face, hungrily.

He let her go on for a moment longer, not speaking.

"This will never do," she said. "It really won't. It will never do."

He looked at his watch again. This time she did not protest, and they began walking across the field again, apart.

"There are wonderful cowslips in this field in the spring," she said. "You would like it. You were always the great one for flowers."

A hundred yards farther on he saw the two boys climbing the stile from the field beyond. She waved her hand and they came across to her. They were hatless, with masses of rather coarse black hair, with lips that seemed too wide and adult for their young

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faces. He saw that their eyes were blackish and deep and that they were not like her.

The four of them walked towards the farm together, and the boys, walking slightly apart with their guns, were stiff and polite, calling him "Sir" whenever they spoke to him.

Five pigeons flew out from a copse of ash trees on steely wings, and the boys began firing instantly, picking off two with fluent easy shots. There was an adultness about the way they lifted the guns, fired, reloaded and picked up the fallen birds, and he could see that she was very proud.

"Hurry on and tell Nancy that Mr. Richardson is staying to supper!" she called.

He suddenly felt that it was a trap, deliberately set for him in the presence of the boys, so that he could not escape it.

"It will be something cold," she said, "but there'll be pheasant, and we always have a ham. That's one thing about a farm. You never lack for anything."

"No?" he said, and for the first time she did not answer.

Under the chestnut trees, by the farm, drifts of scorched leaves had been newly blown by wind across the pond in the farmyard, so that they floated there like fleets of brown feathers.

"You would love the chestnuts in spring," she said. "There's a pink one, too. I think it's that one, there. Yes: it's that one." He followed her into the house.

He stood in the old, respectable farm sitting room, looking about him at the heavy furniture, the chairs of brown leather, the solid dark chests by the wall, the varnished doors and the skirting boards. It was all very prosperous.

She seemed to know what he was thinking, and said:

"Excuse me, I must see about the food."

The elder boy brought him a glass of sherry, and then stood in the centre of the room, awkwardly.

"Do you shoot, sir?" he said.

"No."

The boy was silent for a moment, staring solidly; he seemed not to know what to do or say, and then he said:

"I expect you ride, though, sir, don't you?"

"No," he said, "I don't ride."

They had no more to say to each other, and a moment later she came back.

"I've hurried everything up," she said, "so that you needn't be late after all. Do you mind if I don't change my dress?"

"No," he said.

She spoke to the boy:

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"Go and wash your hands," she said. "And then call your father and tell him supper is ready. And Robert, too. Tell him to scrub them well."

The boy went out of the room.

"They never wash unless you tell them to," she said.

She suddenly stood rigid, staring at him with glistening, hungry blue eyes. She had taken off the coat of her costume. The pale blue of her blouse, cushioned taut by her body, seemed to make the blue of the eyes quite fierce.

"Please come on Tuesday. No, Wednesday. There will be no one here."

"I—"

"Do come. Please." She looked round hurriedly and then came back to him, closely, taking hold of his jacket with both hands. "We could take up where we left off."

Not speaking or moving, he felt himself listening for the boys to come back. She ran her mouth against his face, and he saw beyond her fair head a sudden shoal of chestnut leaves freed from the trees like a wild covey of birds across the pond.

"Do you mind if I kiss you?" she said. "I have to ask. I have to—"

He put his mouth down to her and then, in the same moment, before he could touch her, he heard the footsteps of the boys coming from the passage outside. She went away from him at once, dragging a hand down his arm, pressing his fingers.

"Did you wash?" she said.

The younger boy, Robert, came first, carrying a glazed tray of birds' eggs. Behind him the elder boy kept the door opened with one hand.

"I thought Mr. Richardson would like to see my birds' eggs." The boy smiled.

"Afterwards. After supper," she said. "Did you wash?"

"Yes."

"After supper, then. Is your father there?"

"He was in the gun room," the elder boy said. "He said he would come."

"Let me see the eggs," Richardson said.

"They are very old," she said. "They were given him by an uncle. They're not much. Will you have some more sherry?"

He said thank you, not looking at her, and walked over to where the boy, holding the birds' eggs, looked like a stolid servant holding out to him a tray of little coloured things to eat.

"Some are old," the boy said. "But some are new. Some I collected. Do you know what this is?"

"Isn't it a herring-gull's?"

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"I thought so. I was not certain."

Behind him she called, "Come and have your sherry before we go in."

"That's a nightjar's there," he said. "That's good."

"Yes, I collected that. That's mine—"

"Put them away now," his mother said. "There will be plenty of time afterwards. Or another day."

The boy was pained, but she did not see it. She seemed to be caught up in a tenuous moment of suspense, rigid and oblivious, somewhere between the glass of sherry she was holding and Richardson's eyes.

Then from the door the elder boy said:

"Here's father now. Just coming."

He took the glass of sherry from her and turned, and it was as if, by the door, the elder boy had grown suddenly to a man of forty. The father, stocky, broad and weathered, with the same coarse dark hair, stood there, rubbing together large hairy brown hands.

"You're just in time. We can go in," she said. She was very nervous; she said something in a dazed way about forgetting the introductions.

"No need, no need," the father said. "We'll dispense with formalities." He shook hands with Richardson, the stocky hand muscular and warm. "Which way did you go?"

"We walked across the cowslip field," she said.

"See any birds?"

"No. No, there was nothing. Robbie, put away the eggs now," she said.

"It's a bad season. It's something terrible," he said.

The boy put the tray of eggs on the table, and then the five of them went out of the room, across the passage and into the dining room beyond, for supper. It was twilight in the dining room, because of the shadow of a walnut-tree, still green, on that side of the house, and one of the boys switched on the light above the table.

On the table was a ham on a pink dish, with a brace of cold pheasants beside it and bread and salad and several large pieces of butter, with bottles of beer.

At the head of the table the father sliced the ham steadily and thickly and dissected the pheasants while one of the boys poured the beer.

She did not speak, and they began eating. Richardson, for something to say, spoke of the weather, and the father said how hot and dry the summer had been, and how terribly bad it was for the birds.

"It's very bad," he said several times. "Absolutely awful.

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There'll be no birds at all."

Richardson did not know what to say. "Of course it's been quite exceptional," he said. "What about partridges?"

"As wild as blazes. You can't get near them. It's something terrible. I don't know what we're going to do."

Richardson ate in silence and listened to the sound, across the farmyard, of the falling wind in the dying chestnut leaves. The evening was very beautiful, the sky electric blue under the dark walnut leaves, and he heard a solitary pheasant crying from across the fields.

The father took a deep drink of beer and said:

"How do you find the ham?"

"Delicious," he said. "Wonderfully good."

"One of our own," the father said. "At least we've always got that. At least we can feed."

"You see, I told you," she said.

Richardson turned sharply at the sound of her voice from the bottom of the table. She looked at him in a moment of glittering calm, but the glance was unsustained. She could not look at him any longer.

Her eyes were terribly and hungrily blue, and the pheasant cried again across the fields, and he was transfixed by a fragmentary moment of pain.

"You see, I told you. We never lack for anything here. We have everything we want," she said.

* * *

EASY MONEY

One day, while Shaw was bathing in the sea, he observed a youngster swimming purposefully towards him. At a few yards' distance the lad's heart seemed to fail him, for he turned and was about to make off when Shaw asked him what he wanted.

"They bet me a shilling I wouldn't duck you," spluttered the youth.

"Well?"

"It's off," said the youth, beginning to retreat.

"Nonsense," returned Shaw; "it's easy money. If you wait a moment while I get my breath, I'll let you push my head under water."

The boy returned in triumph to his friends and collected his shilling.

HESKETH PEARSON, *Bernard Shaw*

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☆*Of those who go down to the sea in ships and do business in great waters, the men of the Humber fishing fleets find rare though welcome tribute in the worlds of print and moving pictures.*

Yet the "Trawlerman's Town" remains—in the wide sweeps of the Arctic Ocean and in the bleak wastes of the North Sea—where hardship and danger are part of every day's work.

But robust good humour and the enduring courage of these trawlermen are as constant as their background, and where tragedy lies close to the surface, the comic aspects of their life come the more freshly, with a vigour and authenticity all their own.

THE ARMY COMES ABOARD

by JEROME WILLIS

IN the falling dusk of a summer's evening the S.T. *Bluebell* lay sleepily against the walls of St. Andrew's dock. The round eye of light that shone from just under the bridge indicated that the skipper was aboard, and those who were acquainted with Mr. William Marston, known to his intimates as Treacle Bill, would have been surprised at this. For it still wanted over an hour to tide time, and Treacle was never known to come on board until at least ten minutes before sailing. But strange things were happening on board the *Bluebell* this night.

In his cabin Treacle was holding a consultation with Soapy, his mate—another whose identity, as "Joe Wilkins," had long since merged into a peculiar nickname, the origin of which seemed to be buried in antiquity. On a table between them was a bottle of whisky, several small bottles of soda water and beer and an array of glasses. The long bottle of rum was conspicuous by its absence, as also the mugs out of which they usually drank all liquid, whether tea, beer or rum. Both skipper and mate were in their shoregoing clothes. The faces of both wore doleful expressions.

"Well, we've carried all sorts in this ship, Soapy, parsons, journalists, schoolmasters, but never a bloomin' Guards' officer."

Soapy nodded.

"'Ope the weather's bad . . . then he won't trouble us much."

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"An', what's more, I ain't goin' to 'ave my crew shave just becos we're shipping a bloomin' Guards' officer."

"Mebbe he's a decent bloke."

"Dunno anything about 'im. Gaffer's just told me this mornin' he wos comin', an' what d'ye think o' this—told me I wos to look after 'im—see 'e wos comfortable like. Darn nerve I call it. What the 'ell they think I am—the captain of the *Berengaria?*"

He glared at Soapy, then took a swig at his glass and sighed.

"Don't mind if 'e takes us as 'e finds us, but a Guards' officer, s'welp me."

Steps sounded on the companion ladder and the long figure of the bos'n hove into view. He stopped for a moment and gazed in amazement at the array of glasses on the table. Used as he was to the collection of stained mugs and profusion of rum, he was a little taken aback.

"What, Treacle, ye holdin' a party?"

Treacle grinned sheepishly.

"We got a Guards' officer comin' aboard, Andy."

"Guards' officer!" Andy Pearson pulled at the ends of his drooping moustache reflectively. "Then, you'll be moving aft, Treacle?"

"I darn well won't. He can sleep on that settee, or go aft and try a locker—have a dram?"

He poured out half a glass of whisky and handed it to the bos'n. Andy picked it up and swallowed it without changing his expression.

"Reminds me of when I wos in Jubbulpore."

"You weren't never in Jubbulpore."

"No, but I bet this bloke was. They all been to Jubbulpore, Bangalore, or some other ruddy Ore."

"What the 'ell we're goin' to do with 'im, I dunno."

"Well, that parson bloke wos all right. Why, 'e helped wi' the fishin'."

"Aye, an' what about that schoolmaster? So blasted sick we 'ad to put him ashore at Stornoway. An' all the damn time grumblin'."

The sound of steps on the companion ladder drew all three pairs of eyes to the door. At the foot of the ladder they could see a pair of brightly polished brown shoes, draughtboard red and black stockings, and finally a grey suit of plus fours, surmounted by an alert moustached face. The visitor, a man of between forty five and fifty, halted at the foot of the companion ladder and surveyed them.

"Good evening, which of you is the skipper?"

Treacle stood up.

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"I wos afore you cem."

The visitor suppressed a smile and, advancing, extended his hand.

"Delighted to meet you, Mr. Marston. My name is Doddington, Major Richard Doddington."

Treacle took his hand and introduced him all round.

"'Ave a dram?"

"A what?"

"A dram—whisky, I mean."

"Oh, of course, yes, thanks—Oh, no, no, please, not so much."

He held up his hand as Treacle let the amber liquid flow easily into the glass. He was a small man, square shouldered, with hair greying at the temples and the sides and a clipped grey moustache. He raised his glass.

"Well, here's to the trip, Mr. Marston. No heel-taps."

They drank in silence, each taking stock of the other; then once again eyes swung to the companion ladder, for amidst a forest of oaths and a loud bumping noise, it became apparent that someone was trying to descend.

"Ah, I expect that's my spot of luggage. I told the steward to bring it down."

Treacle went to the foot of the ladder.

"'Ere, not so much swearin' up there."

The bos'n and the mate looked at each other in blank amazement. From up above the argument continued.

"Well, if you take that —— end and don't push, it'll be all right."

"I ain't pushin' you, blast you; I'm pulling."

"Well, for pity's sake, whatever you're doin', do it and don't talk."

"Stop that swearin'."

It was Treacle again. This time the argument ceased instantly and there was an uncanny silence for fully a minute. Then amidst some heavy breathing, Harry Lea, the cook, staggered into view with a huge suitcase on his back. He bounced it on the floor and stood up.

"— near broke me back, that —— did—beg your pardon, sir."

He backed against the door with a shamefaced grin as he caught sight of Major Doddington.

"Oh, don't mind me. Bit heavy, aren't they?"

"Aye, other two's just comin'."

"Other two!"

It was Treacle's interjection as he looked round the cabin in dismay. Amidst more heavy breathing, another big suitcase and

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a large trunk hove into view. When they were brought into the cabin they blocked the space between the table and the fireplace.

Treacle scratched his head.

"You got a *spot* of luggage, all right, sir, ain't ye?"

"Have I brought too much?"

"Well, I dunno, if you wos thinkin' of goin' to the North Pole. This ship's bound for Iceland—three weeks' trip."

"I'll tell ye what, Treacle—let's dump it in the bathroom."

Without waiting for the visitor's consent, they opened the small door next to the fireplace and piled it in beside the bath. Then, as an afterthought, Soapy looked over his shoulder.

"Which one shall ye be needin' most, sir?"

For a moment the major gazed at his luggage in perplexity; then pointed to the top one. It was slid out and bumped under the settee. Meanwhile, the cook hovered at the door with a wistful expression on his face. The other hand who had helped with the luggage stood beside him. Both pairs of eyes were glued to the table.

"You can get aft now, cookie. We'll be wantin' tea hour after sailin'."

The cook turned to the door with a sigh.

"Aye, aye, Tre—skipper."

There were whispered curses as they ascended the ladder—rarely, only very rarely, did Treacle refuse to offer his cook a drink. They felt it was in some way connected with the visitor.

Down in the cabin, skipper, bos'n and mate looked at each other, then at the major.

"Are ye a good sailor, sir?"

"Fairish—you get pretty bad weather on trawlers, though."

"Not much this time o' the year—now an' again it blows up—'ardly a capful o' wind tonight. We're puttin' ye up on yon settee—you'll be all right there."

"Oh, I'll doss down anywhere—don't mind me."

"Aye, we'll be leavin' ye now—gettin' on tide time. We'll 'ave to be gettin' under way."

Treacle led the way out of the cabin as the major started to unlock his suitcase. He was feeling a little uneasy at the sight of that plus fours suit and the red and black stockings. He was wondering if the major would shave every day and wear a collar and tie.

Soapy turned to him as they stepped on to the bridge.

"Wot d'ye think of 'im, Treacle?"

Treacle scratched his head.

"Seems all right. Wonder wot he's got in all them trunks?"

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"Dunno, 'spect there's a dinner suit among 'em. You'll 'ave to get cookie to bring tea for'ard."

"I ain't doin' nuthin' o' the sort. He's comin' aft like the rest of us."

"Wot, an' listen to all the swearin'."

"There won't be no swearin'. I'll see to that. This bloke's a friend of the gaffer's, an' ye know wot he's like with his Bibles and church-goin'. An' I tell ye wot, Soapy, you'd better go for'ard now and tell the crew I ain't goin' to 'ave no swearin' this trip—least not when this bloke's round; then you'd better tell the 'black squad' the same—cookie an' all. Do it now afore we get under way, in case this bloke comes up into the wheel house."

Soapy disappeared aft while Treacle pulled out a cigarette and lighted it. He was not feeling at all happy, and his mood seemed to be transmitted to the bos'n who sucked at his pipe silently. Not that he had taken any rooted objection to his visitor, but somehow his poise and manner of speech had frozen the usually loquacious skipper into silence. He felt that they would all have to watch what they said now, and the trip would be a strain. Well did he remember that schoolmaster who had reported to the gaffers that he had never heard such language anywhere in his life.

After a few minutes Soapy returned, looking very discomfited.

"Chiefy told me to go and —— ——."

"Wot did you tell 'im?"

"I told 'im to do the same."

"That's right—don't take no lip from the 'black squad.'"

Treacle pulled at the window strap and leaned out.

"Slack away there, for-ard!"

"Aye, aye."

"Slack away aft."

He bellowed out his orders with a new sense of importance as the *Bluebell* cast off her moorings and shadowy figures moved about the decks. Then, pulling at a lever in front of him, the siren sang hoarsely through the night. Clang, clang, rang the engine room telegraph, and slowly the engines began to throb. The *Bluebell* stole away from the quayside and glided towards the dock gates, the dark waters gushing from her bows. In a few minutes she was through them and forging her way down the broad reaches of the Humber.

In the excitement of casting off, Treacle had not noticed that the major had come up on the bridge. Now, when he leaned back with that sense of relief at being once more under way, he saw him standing by the port window. He had changed his plus fours for grey flannel trousers and a pepper-and-salt-coloured sports jacket. A canary coloured polo sweater flowed to his neck, while

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on his head he wore a check cap. Treacle tried to suppress a gasp; for he was just thinking of going below to change into his fearnoughts and blue jersey.

"Lovely night, sir. Think we're goin' to have good weather."

He gazed out at the night dotted with stars.

"Yes, skipper, so do I. Think I'll take a turn below on the decks before supper. That'll be about eight bells, I suppose."

"We don't 'ave no bells 'ere."

The major examined him in surprise.

"Then how do the men know their watches?"

"They just looks at their wristlets."

"Oh, I see."

He moved towards the door.

"An' watch out down there, sir. There ain't much clearance—not wot ye might call a promenade."

There was a muffled guffaw as he made his way down the companion ladder.

"Just looks at their wristlets—haw-haw-haw—that's a good one, Treacle—don't 'e look good in his yallow jersey."

Through the bridge windows they watched his shadowy figure as he strode briskly forward and turned at the forecastle. He came striding back on the port side and suddenly there was a shout. Treacle let down a window and leaned out.

"'E's walked into a ruddy bollard—thought 'e would."

But instead of closing the window he kept it open, for down there on the decks was being enacted something that caught his interest and held it. He had heard the major's cultured accents suddenly break in a sharp exclamation of pain; then they rose to a shrill pitch and Treacle had to lean out fully to hear it all.

First he heard a definite personality assigned to the bollard; then he heard it denied a father loudly, after which a slur was even cast on its mother's morality. And as if this was not sufficient, adjective upon adjective was flung upon it with such force that he gasped. He had always thought he knew all the adjectives that allow full expression to a wrathful mind. Just now he felt rather like a little child who had a long way to travel. He turned to Soapy with a sigh of relief.

"Soapy, old boy, just go for'ard and tell 'em to carry on as usual, and then go aft and tell the black squad to do the same."

Peace stole into Treacle's soul. He felt that the greatest difficulty with this peculiar passenger had been removed. In those few minutes he had qualified for his passage nobly.

The major came aft that night for supper and as he ate heartily of the roast beef, potatoes, cabbage and other fare provided, he

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regaled them with stories of Poona, Jubbulpore, and of various other parts of India he had visited.

To the mate, chief engineer and third hand who had spent most of their lives between Hull and the northern latitudes, there was a halo of interest about these places, but Treacle, anxious to keep his end up, tried desperately to describe the beauties of Reykjavik and Tromso under the glamour of the midnight sun. But he soon found that these places paled beside the dark mysteries of India and its lustrous maidens in the eyes of his crew.

Even old Andy Pearson, who had seen something of the world outside of the northern latitudes, leaned on the table, chin on hand and his soupy eyes popping out of his head as the major talked. Treacle crept away to the seclusion of the bridge. The first round was certainly with the visitor.

The following morning when he awakened, the *Bluebell* was rolling gently in the swell. A shaft of bright sunlight cut across from the port and showed up a pair of brown shoes on the floor under the table. He eyed these for a minute vaguely, and then remembered his visitor. From inside the bathroom came the sound of whistling, intermixed with the splashing of water. Treacle pushed aside the blankets, leaned his head on an elbow and thought. Should he get up and dress before the major emerged, thus concealing the fact that he had slept in his underpants or should he lie in bed until he went on deck? The major had retired earlier than he the previous night, and deep, regular snores were issuing from the settee when he himself had turned in.

While Treacle was considering the problem, he heard the slippered feet of the cook descending the companion ladder. Almost at the same time the door of the bathroom opened and a resplendent figure emerged. A russet coloured silk dressing-gown flowed from his shoulders almost to his ankles, while beneath this there was a splash of green-pyjama'd leg and feet encased in red Morocco slippers.

It was perhaps unfortunate that at the same moment the cook entered, attired in a dirty singlet and blue serge trousers, and bearing two cups of tea. He stood aghast, staring at the major, then recovering himself, placed one of the tea mugs at Treacle's elbow.

"I put a good dollop in, skipper—seeing it's first mornin' out."

With this cryptic statement he moved nervously towards the major and placed the other mug on the table. On the tray he carried there was a large bowl with a spoon in it.

"Good mornin', sir—didn't know as if you took salts—but brought 'em along just in case."

And so saying, he slid out of the cabin, leaving Treacle and the

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major still eyeing each other.

"Good mornin'. 'Ad a good night?"

"Yes, thanks, I slept splendidly."

Treacle sipped his tea. He was wondering how long it would take him to dress and, incidentally, what he would wear today. There must be a terrible lot of clothes in those other cases. Meanwhile, the major, leaving his tea untouched, bent down and started to rummage in his suitcase. After a while he extracted two small Indian clubs which he placed carefully on the settee. Then he peeled off his green pyjamas and clothed himself in pale blue silk underwear. Over this he pulled a polo sweater and flannel trousers, while his feet he encased in white plimsolls. Treacle watched him with interest, thinking of his stained fearnoughts thrown dejectedly on a locker near by.

"You don't get much exercise on board, do you, skipper?"

"Not 'cept when we're fishin'."

"How do you keep fit, then?"

"Don't keep fit—allus nearly dyin'."

"You mean to say that you have no physical jerks at all for the crew?"

"Only the jerks the ship gives us—what are ye goin' to do wi' them things?"

Treacle was eyeing the Indian clubs with interest. The major lifted one with a little professional swing.

"Just going to have a spot of exercise before brekker."

He strode out of the cabin with an alert step. Treacle leaned back in bed with a long-drawn sigh. He was wondering how long it would be before his visitor fell overboard. It would be a pity, too, for he had never lost a hand at sea. He climbed out of his bunk and pulled on his fearnoughts.

Aft in the galley Harry Lea, the cook, was also thinking of the major. He had come to the conclusion that it would be well worth while cultivating his friendship, but felt a little peeved that he had been out of it last night with the general conversation at tea. After all, there was only himself and the bos'n who had sailed in other ships besides trawlers, and were thus qualified to converse with the major. Then the bos'n had only been on the Atlantic run for a year before he came to trawlers, while he, Harry Lea, knew all about "furrin parts."

On board the *Bluebell* Harry Lea considered himself a superior person, first because he was a Cockney, and secondly because he considered it was a "come down" for him to be in trawlers at all. Actually the first "port" from which he sailed was Wapping Old Stairs, and he had never been farther than Newcastle in his life . . .

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until he came to trawlers. But with his lively imagination, stimulated by all the talk he had heard in various London dockside pubs, he had built up a story of world travel which he now almost believed himself. As the son of a Thames-side bargee his first voyage had been from Greenhithe to Hammersmith.

After that he had become a regular bargee hand and got as far as Sheerness, towed by a tug. Finally, he joined a coasting steamer, on which he stayed until his eyes began to trouble him. Then, as he put it himself, he retired " from active navigational duties " and went aft in the galley of a trawler. But meanwhile, in various dockside pubs in the ports he had visited, he had accumulated a lot of information which he adorned liberally and offered as his own experiences in " furrin parts."

He threw about a dozen rashers on a huge pan and watched them sizzle over the galley fire. He would have to stop the major calling him " steward." He fancied there was something menial about the term. It suggested a man who fetched and carried, instead of one holding the next important position on a trawler to that of skipper.

By his side a lad of about nineteen was busy cutting thick slices of bread. A kettle sang musically on another part of the big range, and generally all was peaceful in the galley—a rarity except in fine weather. Now and again a hand poked his head in the door, asked for, and was handed a cup of tea.

Through the singing of the kettle and the sizzling of the bacon the cook heard the regular military step of the major along the deck, and poked his head out to have a look. There he was striding along ; this time with a double-breasted blazer over his sweater and flannel trousers, and looking for all the world as if he was on the promenade of a fashionable sea resort, or an ocean liner. The cook turned quickly to the boy by his side.

" Get below and open them other cases of jam."

When the boy had vanished down the hatch, the cook stuck out his head again. " Good morning, sir—weather's favourin' you."

The major paused in his stride, balanced on one foot with the roll of the ship, and smiled a welcome.

" Yes, indeed it is, steward." He peered curiously at the galley. " So this is the cookhouse."

" The galley, sir—come in an' 'ave a look."

He put one delicately shod foot over the iron rim at the door, and sniffed instinctively. Inside there was a heavy odour of bacon and steam which deterred him from entering any farther. The cook turned the bacon busily and spoke over his shoulder.

" Mornin's like this reminds me of when I wos out East."

" Oh, you were out East ? "

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"Aye, aye, sir—to 'ear them seagulls singing this mornin' as if they'd bust themselves, and the sea all flat an' blue-like—could almost see the porpoises bobbin' up an' the flyin' fish like round Mandalay—them queer Chinese junks an' all them palms and Kanaka girls. Helluva life this is after the East."

He heaved a doleful sigh and plucked sizzling pieces of bacon on to a plate.

"Oh, you've travelled a bit, then, steward."

"Aye, sir, I been all over."

He placed the plateful of bacon on a rack, where the steam from the kettle kept it hot, then bent closer to the major in a confidential manner.

"You know, I ain't a steward aboard this ship. I'm the cook. You see, there's only two men that matters on a trawler, the skipper and the cook. I got a lad to carry things for'ard, only now an' again I likes to go meself. They all calls me cookie aboard 'ere."

"Aye, aye, cookie."

Harry Lea grinned a satisfied acknowledgment.

"An' would you like cawfee instead of tea this mornin'?"

"Oh, any old thing will do me." He stopped for a few minutes and his blue eyes twinkled. "And I tell you what, cookie, you call me 'Doddie.'"

For a moment the frying pan trembled and its contents were in imminent danger of being thrown into the fire; then the cook recovered himself with a flush of pride. Here was someone who really recognized him as a man of the world at last . . . and a toff at that. "You bet, Doddie," he promised.

He gave the bacon a little professional flick to prove his composure. Spots of hot grease flew over his head, and the major had to duck to avoid them. In doing so he hit his head against the hatch, and two little words he used made the cook love him all the more. Here was a regular fellow!

At breakfast he did not allow the lad, his mate, to carry in a single utensil, and when he placed the coffee in front of the major he did so with a little flourish, remarking that it was the "real McCoy." This time he hovered about the table, joining in the conversation which was still hanging fire a little, and occasionally stimulating it by references to some wholly fictitious adventures he had figured in abroad.

The skipper and the bos'n exchanged meaning glances when they heard their visitor addressed as "Doddie," and mentally arranged to fix the cook afterwards. But they got little opportunity to do this, because for some peculiar reason the major and the cook seemed to be fast friends that day. Either he was seated on a

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bollard contentedly peeling potatoes, but still wearing his double-breasted blazer, or sitting outside the galley swapping yarns while the cook stirred some mess of pottage within.

From the bridge verandah Treacle and Soapy watched in wonder. In the evening, however, they thought that the last straw had come. For sitting outside the galley when tea was over, the glowing ends of two cigars gave evidence that the cook was still at it. Here was a poser; their visitor pinched from them by a cook! They had a hurried consultation, and it was agreed that Soapy should invite the major to a drink on the bridge, and Treacle would go aft and "fix the cook."

But when Treacle went aft the cook was not there. Neither was he in the messroom, where he often slipped in to have a surreptitious doss. Eventually he found him in the forecastle, surrounded by an admiring throng of deckhands as he extolled the virtues of "my pal, Doddie."

"See 'ere, cookie. I don't want none o' that 'Doddie' business. This 'ere bloke's a gent and he don't want no cook callin' 'im 'Doddie.'"

The cook's eyes opened wide with righteous indignation.

"Why, 'e asked me to!"

"Asked you to?"

"Aye, he says to me, 'I'll call you cookie an' you call me Doddie.'"

Treacle scratched his head reflectively, and the cook, quick to seize his advantage, went on: "An', wot's more, we got something in common, 'ave Doddie and I. We been East, we 'ave—seen the flyin' fish round Mandalay—"

"Oh, shut up! You never saw no flyin' fish—'cept wot you fries on the pan."

There was a roar of laughter at this, and Treacle took the opportunity to ascend the companion ladder—though still scratching his head reflectively. When the major had retired that night—punctually at eleven o'clock—Treacle had another conference with his mate on the bridge.

"Just been thinking, Soapy."

"Thinkin' wot, Treacle?"

"'Bout that major bloke."

"Wot about 'im?"

"Think we be takin' 'im wrong. P'rhaps he wants to muck in with us—proper like. He ain't nuthin' like the gaffers—he's the 'real McCoy' 'e is."

"Take 'im round the ship tomorrow—show 'im engine room an' all the lot."

"Aye—that's a good idea."

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The following morning the major jumped to the suggestion immediately. Not only did he want to go down the engine-room, but he produced a brand new suit of overalls specially for the occasion. Following the chief engineer and Treacle, he balanced himself precariously on iron ladders, peered down into greasy recesses, and finally would not be satisfied until he had taken a hand at firing the stokehold. Just before lunch he emerged a blackened but happy little man. In the afternoon he again peeled potatoes with the cook, and ultimately suggested that he would show him how to make a curry.

On the fourth day out it came up a bit "scuffly" and a slight spray started to break over the decks, but even then the major was properly attired. With shining rubber boots and oilskins, he paraded the decks and did his mile, dodging bollards and winches with seamanlike skill.

Then the seas flattened out again, the days grew longer and the midnight sun soon flooded the decks. Just off the east coast of Iceland they "shot" the trawl, and the major would not be happy until he had a hand with the gutting. This, however, he found a little bit beyond him, and more than once fell headlong into the fish ponds, and had to be pulled out, legs first.

By this time he was "Doddie" to all the crew; but he never missed swinging his clubs before breakfast or walking his mile before tea. For the four days that they trawled, he let a little grey stubble grow on his chin; then, when they hauled in the trawl for the last night, his face glowed with that cherublike complexion again, and he held a little party in the skipper's cabin. Deep from the recesses of his trunk he produced a bottle of old brandy; cigars were handed out, tongues were loosened, and even Treacle found that the major could tell "as good a one as any o' them."

If he had any further doubts of the qualities of the major as a mixer, they were dispelled by a series of choruses he heard the night before they sighted the Spurn Light. From the depths of the forecastle they floated up, and he stopped in wonder for a moment. There was ingenuity about the rhyme, fluency about the language in which it was expressed, and a rare tuneful melody pervading the whole. And it was the major who led the chorus.

When the lights of Hull were gleaming in the distance, it was a strange ship's crew who waited to go ashore. Andy Pearson stood at the wheel, resplendent in the major's double-breasted blazer, complete with brass buttons. It did not fit him, but he did not seem to be upset about that. Beside him stood Soapy in a plus fours suit and a thick jersey.

Treacle was wearing a pair of flannel trousers and a leather golfing jacket; while the major himself, having disposed of all his

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kit, was determined to go ashore in what he wore, a pair of fearnoughts baggy at the knees and a greasy blue jersey. None of them, however, wore a more important air than the lord of the galley, Harry Lea, who patted a chest which was covered with a canary coloured sweater.

* * *

HEY NONNY NONNY!

It is Spring! It is Spring!
Let us leap! Let us sing!
Let us claim we have hives
And abandon our wives!
Let us hire violins
To belittle our sins!
Let us loll in the grotto!
Let this be our motto:
Not sackcloth, but satin!
Not Nordic, but Latin!

Spring is what winter
Always gazinta.
Science finds reasons
For mutable seasons.
Can't you react
With a little more tact?
Will nobody fling
A garland to Spring?

Oh, hey nonny nonny!
Oh, Jennie! Oh, Johnnie!
Doesn't dove rhyme with love
While the moon shines above?
Isn't May for the wooer
And June for l'amour?
These birds and these flowers,
These breezes and bowers,
These gay tirra-lirras
Hey nonny!
Hey nonny!
Hey nonny . . .

OGDEN NASH

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HOME, SWEET HOME

They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree

The Book of Micah

A friend of mine found himself the other day on the platform of a country station in the south of Scotland near the sea-coast. A middle-aged couple were the only people visible, and they sat together on the single form provided for waiting passengers. They did not speak, but just sat and gazed at the rails, at the opposite platform, at the fields beyond, at the clouds above, at anything, in fact, within the range of vision. My friend went and sat beside them to wait for his train. Presently another person, a woman, appeared, and advancing to the other two, addressed them. She wondered what train the couple were waiting for. Was their holiday over?

"Oh no," said the woman. "We've another week yet."

"Then maybe ye're waiting for a friend?"

"No," replied the woman. "We're just sitting. We like to come here in the evening and see the trains come in and out. It's a change, and it makes us think of home . . ."

A. G. GARDINER, 1865-1946, *Many Furrows*

The More Fool I—

TOUCHSTONE: *Ay, now am I in Arden; the more fool I: when I was at home, I was in a better place . . .*

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *As You Like It*

Safe Anchorage

Seeing the freshwater limpets I was reminded of one of their saltwater relatives, that I had seen on the coast in Devon . . .

I had always imagined that the peregrinations of these limpets were limited . . . but on this particular day, it was about noon, when I happened to be looking into a rock pool and noticed that one of them was moving. This individual was slowly gliding over the rock with little apparent hesitation as to the way in which he wanted to go. Once when he reached a shallow ledge he stopped, as if to gain breath before attempting the climb, but it was only a minute or two before he had pulled himself on to the higher level, and proceeded on his way.

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By this time, in a space of seven or eight minutes, he had progressed nearly as many inches. As he swung slightly to his left to avoid a small cone of orange coloured sponge he seemed to be heading for an oval patch on the rock which was bare of any of the usual pink encrustations. This naked spot seemed to me to have almost but not quite the same outline as the edge of the limpet's shell, and I wondered if it was really his home, and if he would settle there.

Sure enough he came to a full stop on it, and he then proceeded to nestle, much as a broody hen nestles over her eggs, attempting to fit each protrusion of his shell into a corresponding depression in the rock. But it was obvious that something was wrong, for, try as he would, he could not make himself comfortable. He moved from side to side without advantage. He moved backwards and forwards. You're on the wrong spot after all, I thought to myself.

Suddenly, as if a bright idea had struck him, he raised himself on his "foot," and turned completely round. Then, snuggling down, his shell fitted the rock at all points, and he remained as motionless as the Sphinx.

ROBERT GIBBINGS, *Sweet Thames Run Softly*

Night Thoughts

So bright a gleam on the foot of my bed—
Could there have been a frost already?
Lifting myself to look, I found that it was moonlight.
Sinking back again, I thought suddenly of home.

LI PO, *T'ang Dynasty*, translated by Witter Bynner

Comen Home

I, John Maundeville Knight (although I be unworthy) have passed many lands and many isles and countries and searched many full strange places, and have been in many a full good honourable company, and now I am comen home, maugre myself, to rest, for gowts that me distreynen . . .

SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE, *Fourteenth Century, Voiage and Travaile, from a Fourteenth Century Manuscript*

Thanksgiving

Now will I to home and household hearth
Move on, and first give thanks unto the gods,
Who led me forth and brought me back again.

AESCHYLUS, 525–456 B.C., CHOEPHORI

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Vantage In

"And the most curious thing," said Freeman to Trueman, as they established themselves under a pine tree, with an ample portion of roast meat, and armed with their travelling knives and forks, "and the most curious thing is, that they say these people are Christians! Who ever heard of Christians wearing turbans?"

"Or eating without knives and forks?" added Trueman.

"It would astonish their weak minds in the steward's room at Bellamont, if they could see all this, John," said Mr. Freeman, pensively. "A man who travels has very great advantages."

"And very great hardships too," said Trueman. "I don't care for work, but I do like to have my meals regular."

BENJAMIN DISRAELI, 1804–1881, *Tancred*

Sanctuary

Night, rustling the grey grass, is at your door;
Stir the coals quietly—then look once more
On the blue highroad, spread with mists that rise
From water-meads . . .
The spring dusk dies
From your square window panes; your firelight dips,
Tremblingly, to your jar of closed cowslips.

You can hear a horse tear the cool spring grass
At the road's edge, slowly—now his feet pass,
Stumbling, to his own field. Now, like a thread
Of sound drawn through the dark, wood waters tread
On rocks and small round stones—and now again,
The wind blows budded boughs against your pane.

"Rest now," the grass says, "rest"—and your coals part
To show the dreamlit caves of the fire's heart.
"Rest now," the grass says. "Rest," the blown trees sing . . .
Up the high road you hear the inn sign swing.

DOROTHY ROBERTS

If!

I should like to spend the whole of my life travelling if I could anywhere borrow another life to spend at home.

WILLIAM HAZLITT, 1834–1913, *Table-Talk*

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THE REEF

Gold beyond their wildest dreams lay there, in the muddy depths of a swamp-pool

by H. VERNOR DIXON

JO stood quietly on the edge of the wharf looking down at the man in the cockpit of the hired fishing cruiser. He was sloshing buckets of water across the deck, ridding the boards of blood and fish scales. He was small and sunburned and seemed very tired. The boys, Jo thought, would have no difficulty in handling him.

She put a cigarette to her full lips and asked softly, "Got a match, mister?"

The man paused and looked up to the wharf. He did not raise his eyes higher than the hem of Jo's plain cotton dress. "Beat it," he said, "I got no time for sea gulls."

He put the bucket aside and picked up a mop, straightening as he did so, to roll the tired muscles in his shoulders. His eyes came up then and he really saw Jo. The sun was at her back, the hot Florida sun low on the western horizon, outlining Jo's lithe figure, shining through her dress and darkening her tawny skin. Coal black hair was pulled back severely from a broad forehead and wrapped in a tight knot at the nape of her neck. Her legs and arms were slim, but her cheekbones were high and wide, and there was an Indian flare to her nostrils. Her breasts were higher and more pointed than a white woman's and her bare feet were broad. The man thought, part Seminole or Osceola—but good looking.

He frowned and wondered if he had the time, and decided he had. He winked broadly at Jo. "Sure, I got a match. Come aboard and get it."

Jo stepped down from the wharf to the float and then aboard the boat. The man lit her cigarette with fingers that had begun to tremble slightly. On closer inspection, Jo was even better than just good looking. His grin widened. He took Jo's arm, squeezing the warm flesh, and stepped with her into the aft-cabin. There his grin faded into an ugly grimace as he suddenly felt the sharp point of the knife in the pit of his stomach.

Jo said flatly, with no emotion in her voice or eyes, "I wouldn't move, mister."

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He looked over her shoulder and saw the two men drop from the wharf and rush aboard the boat, the smaller of the men, the dark one, sidled round Jo and threw an armlock round the boatman's throat. The bigger man, his tongue caught between bared teeth, took quick, careful aim, and swung a length of pipe at the boatman's skull. The little man let him drop to the deck.

Jo looked at the big man and asked, "You going to kill him, George?"

George frowned and shrugged. "I don't know yet. What do you think, Matty?"

"This isn't the time to talk about that," Matty said. "Let's get him out of sight. We'd all better get out of sight."

Jo held the door open as they dragged the boatman into the cabin. She returned to the wharf and brought aboard a bulky package. Matty had already stripped the boatman and was dressed in his peaked cap, horizontally striped sweater and faded blue dungarees. They were small enough to fit him well. The boatman had been trussed and gagged and rolled into the small galley. He was still unconscious, and bleeding profusely.

Jo opened the package and handed revolvers and cartridges to George and Matty. The rest of the package, which she retied, contained food.

George chuckled and said, "We won't need that. The galley is loaded. It's even got beer on ice. Anybody want any?"

Matty did. He and George sat on a berth drinking cold beer, while Jo sat opposite them, waiting for dark. When she sat like this, watching George, there was always deep warmth in her eyes. He was the best man she had ever known.

George was huge and powerful, with fists like hams, but he was often surprisingly gentle. His hair was corn yellow and his eyes light blue. He laughed easily, but he blew up easily. He was weak, she knew that, but then he had never had a decent chance. George had worked with boats, or on the wharves, all his life, but having had no education he had never done better than occasional jobs on fishing boats. His one ambition was to own his own boat for hire. Perhaps now he would have his chance.

Matty was a different breed. He was strictly a wharf rat, with a small balding head, beady eyes, bad teeth, and the furtive, fear ridden way of a small-time crook. Jo did not know Matty very well—he had come to George with his scheme only a few days before. But she knew his kind. He had to buy everything he got from life, even women. He wanted money as he wanted air to breathe. And he would fight for it just as viciously.

Matty was obviously nervous. George winked at him and nudged an elbow in his ribs. "Cool off, man. We're doing fine.

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We've got the fastest boat in the hire fleet, and I know how to run it. All you've got to do is hold up your end. You sure you know how to hit the cove ? "

Matty wiped beer from his thin lips and sneered. " Ain't I been telling you I know it like the back of my right hand ? I been in there with Riley dozens of times. There's a pine covered promontory showing the way in through the reef. We can't miss."

" Even at night ? "

" It's better at night. Easier to pick up the promontory with a searchlight."

" Yeah." George poured beer down his throat, licked his lips. " This Riley was some operator ? "

Matty nodded. " I guess he was the biggest alien smuggler running out of Cuba. He knew all the tricks. Very cunning. I was his contact man here in Key West. He'd run in here in broad daylight with a load of fish on deck, but with a dozen D.P.'s or Chinks in the hold. He'd pick me up in the Keys, then we'd head for the cove. It was first rate."

" Where'd the aliens go from the cabin in the cove ? "

" When things looked clear he'd run them up the west coast, or sometimes he'd take them across the Gulf to Texas."

" How much did he get for each ? "

" Anywhere from six hundred bucks up to two thousand. All depended on the traffic. Maybe two thousand apiece."

George whistled softly.

Jo said tonelessly, " But he's dead now."

" Well, anybody can make a mistake," Matty explained. " You don't make more than one in that game. He lost some Chinks up in the swamps and the gang went after him. They slit his throat." He grinned. " But that's our luck."

George laughed, and swung his powerful shoulders as he got to his feet. " Time to get going, Matty. Cast off the lines. Jo, you stay below until we clear the harbour."

The two men went out to the cockpit and looked up at the wharf. No one was about. Everything was running perfectly. George went to the controls, and after a few minutes had the two powerful engines purring smoothly. Matty jumped out on the float, cast off, then scrambled back into the cockpit. He was breathing hard. George glanced at him and Matty's eyes slid away. He did not like showing his fear before the bigger man. Already a powerful resentment was growing within him.

George stood at the wheel, backed away from the float, threw the engines into full ahead and turned the cruiser in a wide arc away from the wharf. He looked back at the lights of Key West fading astern and set a course for Cuba, just in case anyone had

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seen them leave. After fifteen minutes he reversed course in a wide circle and passed the lights of Key West to starboard. He took bearings from two different ranges, then set his true course. He switched off all lights and ran in the soft dark.

Matty, standing close by his shoulder, asked, "How about your woman? Ain't you going to put her off somewhere?"

"Hell, no. Didn't you say it would take the two of us to get the money? Someone must stay aboard. She understands boats."

"She looks Indian to me."

George chuckled. "She's part Seminole and part Coast Guard. She's some girl. Ought to have more than wharf rats hanging round her. She ought to have clothes and"—he groped for words with his hand—"and things."

"She'll get them. We all will."

"If you know what you're doing, we will—and you'd damned well better know or else—"

Matty exploded, "I tell you the whole thing's as simple as pie! Now, look. Riley never trusted the banks. Too easy to check on him. So he hid his cash in the cabin. And I know exactly where. I followed him once. The money's in an airtight zinc box in a deep pool in the swamp. I saw him put some in, and there was plenty more there already."

"Perhaps the rest of his crew have got it by now."

"Dammit, George. No one could find that money unless they knew exactly where to look. The four other men in his crew are there looking for it now, but they think it's somewhere in the cabin. I'm the only one who knows exactly where."

"How much did you say was there?"

"Twenty thousand. Maybe more."

They lapsed into silence, thinking of the fortune. George's mind, however, turned to the man lying in the galley. He had seen all three of them. He could identify them. Matty would be safe when they sold the boat and scattered, but George and Jo would be easy to pick up. Jo was too easy to spot . . . George made up his mind.

He turned the wheel over to Matty and went below. Jo was just coming out with plates of food. George passed her in the dark and patted her rear. He went to the galley and dragged the unconscious boatman out. He lifted him easily in his arms and walked out to the cockpit. He glanced towards Matty and Jo, who were watching him, then walked back to the stern. He placed the man in the dinghy and cut him adrift. It might be days before he would be picked up, but at least he had a chance.

It was many hours later when Matty went down to touch Jo's

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arm as she slept in one of the bunks. She followed him out to the cockpit. The engines were idling and the boat was dead in the shallow waters of Florida Bay. The sea was becoming choppy, and the swamps were close, very close. A black shoreline showed dimly beyond the pale white of the breakers.

George said, "We need your eyes, Jo. You get up on the cabin roof and look out for the pine trees. I'm going to run along the shore. Matty thinks we're at Riley's cove. Watch carefully."

Jo climbed up to the cabin roof and looked towards the shore. Matty switched on the powerful searchlight and turned it shorewards. George eased the engines to half speed and the boat began running through the choppy water. They passed trees and mudbanks, then came to a large cove, and Jo cried out as she caught sight of the pine covered ridge.

Matty cried with excitement, "That's it, George! By heaven, we've hit it! Now keep going and then turn in under the promontory. That'll take us through the reef."

George handled the wheel gingerly, his eyes fixed on the approaching ridge and the surf. The breakers were high on the reef; that would mean a bad surge in the opening and the possibility of broaching. High speed, though, would carry them through safely. He opened the engines full ahead, spun the wheel, and headed in towards the breakers, running at full speed.

Matty touched his shoulder and said reassuringly, "You're doing right. No one could ever see that break until they were in it. Just keep—"

But at that moment the boat hit the surf and there was a terrible grinding and crashing as the timbers smashed into the reef and the bottom was gutted. Jo was thrown clear as the boat spun wildly in the clutch of the surf, and Matty was pitched into the cabin. The next breaker picked them up and over the reef and tossed them into the waters of the cove. As the boat sank it grounded gently ashore.

George grabbed Matty, who had been knocked out, jumped into the water and waded ashore. Jo was waiting for them, calmly wiping the water from her face. Cypress trees, shaggy with moss, towered over them.

Dawn found the three of them seated on the shore, watching the waves wash about the cruiser's cabin.

"You and your goddamned reef!" George said bitterly.

Matty shook his head, still not quite sure he was alive and safe. "The only thing I can think," he mumbled, "is that someone changed the position of them pine trees."

"Well, we're stuck now sure as hell. You know what's north and all around us? Swamp. The southern end of the Everglades.

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All swamp. The closest civilized place is at least twenty five miles through swamp, and there ain't you or me or any other white man can do it."

Matty swallowed hard and mumbled, "I don't swim very well either." He leaned over to clasp his arms about his bony knees and then suddenly he was smiling: "What a dope I am! The gang at the cabin came in here in canoes after Riley was killed. One of 'em's a Seminole, like your woman here, only he's full-blood. He led them in. If they're still at the cabin we could swipe a canoe and get out that way through the swamp."

George nodded. "Only way, I suppose. But let's get the money first before we mess about with canoes. You lead the way."

Matty pulled off his sweater and wrung it out. George stared at the money belt round his waist and chuckled and asked if it was loaded. Matty said, "It will be," and squirmed back into the sweater. He made a jerking motion with his chin and turned away from the cove. He and George both had a look at their guns before moving forward. Jo followed.

A narrow trail led into the swamp away from the cove, zigzagging in and out through the tree trunks to stay on relatively dry land. They walked for half an hour, before Matty halted. George realized then why Matty had not been afraid of the men at the cabin seeing the cruiser's light. The cabin was deep in the swamp and far back from the cove.

They turned off on to an almost obscure trail angling away from the first. Jo noticed that George resented having to follow Matty. He did not like following anyone, especially a smaller man.

They came finally to a large hummock, or island, deep in grass, and crawled cautiously forward, to peer over the edge. Across from them was another identical hummock, but mostly cleared of grass. In the middle was a large hut with a grass roof. There was a place to cook, a little distance from the shack, and two tables with benches. That was all. A man was standing at the cooking place, frying bacon. Two other men were slumped on the benches.

Matty whispered, "Donaldson, the Indian and Petrie. I wonder where the hell's Miguel?"

George's resentment of the other's leadership was in his voice as he asked irritably, "Who's he?"

"Riley's right hand man." Matty shuddered. "I'd hate to run into him."

George stared across at the dozens of mounds of newly turned earth on the other hummock. "Looks as if they've been doing plenty of digging."

Matty smothered a nervous laugh. "Yeah. They think Riley

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buried his money on the island, the fools." He asked anxiously, "See any canoes?"

Jo said, "Two on the right side of the island, there in the grass. See?"

The men squinted and then nodded, but said nothing. The canoes were in plain sight of the other men. Getting one of them away could be an extremely hazardous matter.

Jo whispered, "We'll get them tonight."

All of them backed away from the edge of the grass and crawled down the far side of the island. When they were out of the grass they stood up. Matty looked round at the gloomy swamp and was beginning to get excited. His eyes were twin pinpoints of hard light. He saw a tree he recognized, motioned to the others, and hurried forwards. They went from tree to tree, jumping on the roots, and made their way round the hummock with the cabin on it, and deeper into the swamp. At last they came to a quiet pool, shining dark and smooth under the trees.

Matty came to a halt. "This is it," he announced exultantly.

George was also getting excited. "You're sure there ain't no mistake?"

"Cripes, no. I'd never miss this place. Riley stood right where we're standing now and then he got his clothes off and swum out there about twenty feet and dived under. I watched him. He dived when he got himself in line with that tree on the left, the big one. The box is right down there in the middle, anchored to chains. I suppose you just slip it out." He turned to look at George. "I don't swim too well."

George looked at the still, black water, then at Jo.

She shrugged and said, "I'll get it."

Jo slipped out of her dress, her single bit of clothing, and waded into the water. Within a few feet she was swimming. As she reached the middle of the pool, she glanced at the tree on the left, then took a deep breath and went under.

It was not far to the bottom, perhaps eight or nine feet. Jo felt round in the mud and found nothing. She came back to the top for another breath of air, then went under again. Feeling in the mud with her hand she came in contact with the smooth, flat shape of a large zinc box. It was held to the bottom by chains through a tree root. Jo slipped the box out of the chains and returned to the surface of the pool.

A voice cracked like a whip. "Right, sister. Now you can just swim this way like a good girl."

Jo looked towards George and Matty and then beyond them. A man was standing on a tree root near the edge of the pool. He

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had not been one she had seen at the cabin, so he was probably Miguel. He had a shotgun in his hands and he was smiling, but there was violence in that smile. Jo had known many like him. He would have no compunction about shooting all three of them. Jo thought wildly, but there was no way out. She had to do as she was told.

She started swimming with one arm, holding the box with the other. As she swam, she watched George. His hands were held from his sides, but his right hand was not too far from the butt of the revolver in his belt. He was tensed, like an animal about to spring. She must try and give him a chance to move.

When Jo reached shallow water she did not stand up, but continued swimming towards the stranger. When the water was too shallow to swim any longer, she suddenly got to her feet almost directly in front of Miguel. She was counting on his not expecting to see a nude woman.

He wasn't. He stared with open mouth, and the shotgun lowered for a fraction of a second.

That was all George needed. His hand swept for his gun in one lightning movement and was jerking at the trigger almost the moment it cleared his belt. He was firing blind, but the stranger pitched forward, clutching at his right shoulder, and splashed into the pool. He wouldn't be bothering anyone for a long while.

"The others!" Matty screamed. "They'll hear the shots. We've got to get out of here."

George glanced towards Miguel, obviously intending to finish the man, but changed his mind. The two men started to run. Jo snatched up her dress from the ground and hurried after them. They jumped from tree to tree, bearing always to the east, and skirted the edges of grassy hummocks so they would leave no trail for the Seminole to follow. Jo was faster and more swamp-wise than the men, so she went ahead to lead them. She ran and waded steadily for more than an hour before slowing down. When she thought they were safe, she stepped on to a grassy hummock and slid into her dress. The men threw themselves exhausted at her feet.

When they were rested, Jo suggested that they should move on. Matty shook his head. "We've got to have a canoe. We shall have to take a chance and go back tonight."

Jo looked at Matty with pity. "There is an Indian on that island. Even I could not get anywhere near the canoe now he knows someone is about. We'll have to go through the swamp."

"That's impossible."

"You forget. I'm Seminole, too—partly. These swamps and canals are my home. We can keep moving until night."

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She handed the box to George, who wanted to open it immediately, but Jo would not waste the time. She started deeper into the swamp, going north, the men following, taking turns carrying the box. She said nothing to them of her plans, but she was sure there was a drainage canal a few miles to the north. If there was a canal there would also be a road.

She moved all day, never stopping. She was soon covered with mud and muck, and her dress was badly torn, but the men were in worse condition. They did not see the small pitfalls visible to her eyes, and stumbled and staggered and fell throughout the day. They tried to stop many times, but each time they had to hurry again to keep up with her. They knew that without her they would die in the swamp, so they kept moving.

She stopped that evening, as the sun was going down, on a small grassy hummock raised above the swamp. The men threw themselves on the grass, while Jo searched for dry wood and started a fire with George's lighter. The men sat up and watched her, and finally found enough reserve strength in themselves to get more fuel. While Matty was gone on a searching expedition, George took the knife from the thong round Jo's throat and slipped it under his belt. He had lost his gun somewhere in the swamp.

When the fire was going briskly enough to see by, they opened the zinc box and spilled the contents out on the grass. George and Matty counted the money, then stared wide-eyed at each other. It was all in neat thousand dollar packets of ten one hundred dollar notes. The total amount was fifty two thousand dollars, far more than either of them had dared to dream.

George sat back and simply stared into the dark beyond the fire, grinning foolishly. Now he could own the boat he had always wanted. No more having to do what he was told by men he could break in half with his hands. And Jo could share, too. She would be a knockout in good clothes. What a pair they would make, with their own business and money in the bank!

Matty giggled hysterically and said, "You're luckier than me in a way, George. You've already got a good looking woman. Cripes," he chuckled, "when I think of her swimming in that pool! But now that's for me, too—a good looking woman."

He thought of the kind he would get, a young, good looking blonde. It would be easy with money to spend. Matty dreamed of the blonde.

George's eyes were suddenly hard and cold. He said huskily, "Let's split the money now."

Matty shrugged. "If you want to, but I don't think it's a good idea. Leave it in the box, where it won't get lost or wet, and we

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can take turns carrying it."

Jo looked away from them, stretched out on her back and stared up at the stars through the trees, and the world she had always dreamed of was there at the tips of her fingers. No more wharf rats. No more asking strangers for a match. Clothes. Shoes. A bed with real sheets. Perhaps George would even marry her.

George scooped up the money and replaced it in the box. He looked towards the dying fire, then he glanced narrowly at Jo. He was no longer grinning. The idea of owning an even bigger boat than he had planned had come into his mind. He touched the knife under his belt, moving round to the other side of the fire, slightly away from Matty and Jo. Matty glanced at him and looked puzzled for a moment. Then he smiled. He had the only gun.

Matty said, "That's the first thing—a good looking gal like your woman. I'll go up to Miami . . ." His voice droned on.

George continued to watch Jo. When the fire was almost down to embers, she at last turned her head. His eyes tightened and swung to Matty, then back to Jo. He moved his hand to the knife, so she could see it, and again looked at Matty. What he was trying to tell her was suddenly clear. He wanted to use her as bait again.

Jo shook her head slightly, but when George's eyes tightened to narrow slits, she nodded. George stretched out on his side and closed his eyes. He looked as if he had gone to sleep.

Jo was lying close by Matty. She was on her back, her hands clasped under her head. She raised her feet, propping her knees in the air. The ragged skirt slowly slid down smooth brown thighs. It was not long before Matty noticed it. He looked over at George, apparently asleep, then turned on his side to face Jo, his back to George. He waited until the embers of the fire had gone out, then lightly put a hand on Jo's waist.

Jo was looking beyond him, trying to pierce the dark. She saw George move, the flash of the knife, and then he was crawling towards them. Matty's hand pressed on her waist. Jo continued watching George. He was closer, and then he was slowly rising to his feet with the knife in his hand. But he rustled the grass, and at that moment Matty looked round.

George lunged, but Matty rolled away with a weird cry and pulled out his gun. George threw himself at Matty, but the bullet caught him high in the chest, and the force of it knocked him over backwards. Matty leaped to his feet, stood over George and fired again. There was a bubble in George's throat, and then silence. Matty shoved the big man over the edge of the hummock.

Jo moaned softly to herself as she heard the splash in the water.

Matty strode back to Jo and jabbed a finger at her. "The two of you planned that," he screamed. "You was in it. I ought to

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put a slug in you."

"Go ahead. You'll rot here with me if you do."

Matty lowered himself wearily to the grass a few yards from Jo. He put more cartridges in the gun and sat with his arms round his knees and the gun in his hands, his eyes on Jo's dim form in the night. She watched him for a while and then rolled over. He was not going to do anything. He would stay awake all night, and in the morning he would be tired out. In the morning, too, she would swing away from the canal and deeper into the swamp. He could not last long. She closed her eyes, thinking of what she could do with all the money.

When dawn arrived, Jo's body was stiff, but she was refreshed. Matty's eyes were sunken, dark hollows, his lips a thin vicious line. He was in a killing mood, but Jo felt safe as long as they were in the swamp. Matty motioned with his gun for her to lead the way. He followed close behind, carrying the zinc box.

Jo started again through the swamp, following the easy way whenever possible, heading north and east. Just before noon she heard dimly a sound that she recognized—the whine of car tyres on a sunbaked road. She glanced back at Matty. He had not heard. He was stumbling along in the swamp, bumping into trees, falling over roots. Jo swung away from the road sounds.

She now chose the hard way through the swamp, going waist-deep in water, deliberately slogging through muddy stretches and choosing a course between tree roots where the jumps were longer. She smiled inwardly when, after an hour, Matty asked her to carry the box. She took it from him, hugged it in her arms and then proceeded more cautiously, her eyes darting to left and right. She at last found what she was seeking, a slime-covered pool of water.

Jo swung towards the bog, with Matty staggering at her heels. As she approached it, she could have cried with joy. There was a small log lying along the side of the bog. Matty could never walk that. She looked back at him over her shoulder, stepped on to the log and ran across it, to jump clear of the bog at the far end. Matty did not even look up. He came on like a sleepwalker and staggered on to the small log. He had taken only a few steps when his feet skidded and he pitched into the water. He went under without a cry, and did not come up.

Jo stood where she was, looking into the oily water until it had subsided, then she started due north. The zinc box was all hers.

That night she crouched in thick grass by the side of the road, and a little below a garage with lighted petrol pumps. There was one other building across the road, a cheap café. She could hear

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the music blaring out into the night. She had been waiting patiently for two hours. At last a car pulled up with luggage in the back, and a man and woman got out to go in the café. Jo ran across the road and opened the door of the car. She found the woman's suitcase, identifying it by scent, and took it from the car. She closed the door softly and went back to crouch in the grass. The man and woman came out after a few minutes and drove away.

Jo waited again until the garage man crossed the road for a drink, then she ran to the ladies' room. She quickly ripped the ragged dress from her body, soaked it in water, and used it to wash herself. Hurriedly she opened the suitcase and found a pair of shoes. They were too small, but she got them on. Then she put on a linen skirt, a silk blouse, and a bolero jacket. They were all very snug. She undid the knot of her hair, combed it with her fingers and knotted it again. She looked into the glass and decided she was presentable enough.

She threw the suitcase and the ragged dress in the grass, and crossed to the café. She stood by a window and looked inside. The only customers in the small room were three men drinking beer at a back table. Swamp rats. Ugly. Mean. Jo smiled. Never again would she have to look at men like that.

But she could not take the zinc box inside. That was altogether too conspicuous. The money could, somehow, be stuffed in her blouse. She stepped away from the window and undid the box. Her hand went inside and stopped. She felt chilled. She withdrew her hand and turned the box upside down. Dirt spilled out. Nothing else.

She dropped the box and looked back towards the dark swamp. Somewhere in one of the thousands of bogs that no one could ever find again was fifty two thousand dollars in a money belt. Matty had evidently made the switch while she slept.

Jo opened the screen door of the café and stepped inside. She let the door slam behind her. One of the men looked up.

Jo walked towards him. "Got a cigarette?" she said, tiredly.

The man looked her up and down and grinned. "Pull up a chair and sit down."

Jo sat down. Wearily she propped her elbows on the table and rested her chin in her hands. Then she stared sadly into space.

* * *

FASHION NOTE

Women's styles may change, but their designs remain the same.

OSCAR WILDE

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★*A story by the author of "Dracula" promises at least one thing, that however hard we may try we shall not sleep quietly in our beds o' nights! Bram Stoker, unequalled in his conjuring of the unquiet dead, contrives with sinister art that the reader shall whisper to himself, "Sooner or later, if I'm not very careful, this may happen to* me *!"*

JUDGE'S HOUSE

by BRAM STOKER

WHEN the time for his examination drew near Malcolm Malcolmson made up his mind to go somewhere to read by himself. He determined to find some unpretentious little town where there would be nothing to distract him, and refrained from asking suggestions from any of his friends. For, he argued, each would recommend some place where he had already acquaintances, and as Malcolmson wished to avoid friends so he had no wish to encumber himself with the attention of friends' friends. He packed a portmanteau with some clothes and all the books he required, and then took a ticket for the first name on the local timetable which he did not know.

When at the end of three hours' journey he alighted at Benchurch, he felt satisfied that he had so far obliterated his tracks as to be sure of having a peaceful opportunity of pursuing his studies. He went straight to the one inn which the sleepy little place contained, and put up for the night.

Benchurch was a market town, and once in three weeks was crowded to excess, but for the remainder of the twenty one days it was as attractive as a desert. Malcolmson looked around the day after his arrival to try to find quarters more isolated than even so quiet an inn as *The Good Traveller*. There was only one place which took his fancy, and it certainly satisfied his wildest ideas regarding quiet; in fact, quiet was not the proper word to apply to it—desolation was the only term conveying any suitable idea of its isolation.

It was an old rambling, well-built house of the Jacobean style, with heavy gables and windows, unusually small, and set higher than was customary in such houses, and was surrounded with a high brick wall massively built. Indeed, on examination, it looked more like a fortified house than an ordinary dwelling. But all these things pleased Malcolmson.

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"Here," he thought, "is the very spot I have been looking for, and if I can only get the opportunity of using it I shall be happy." His joy was increased when he realized beyond doubt that it was not at present inhabited.

From the post office he got the name of the agent, who was surprised at the application to rent a part of the old house. Mr. Carnford, the local lawyer and agent, was a genial old gentleman, and frankly confessed his delight at anyone being willing to live in it.

"To tell you the truth," said he, "I should be only too happy, on behalf of the owners, to let anyone have the house rent free for a term of years if only to accustom the people here to see it inhabited. It has been so long empty that some kind of absurd prejudice has grown up about it, and this can be best put down by its occupation—if only," he added with a sly glance at Malcolmson, "by a scholar like yourself, who wants its quiet for a time."

Malcolmson thought it needless to ask the agent about the "absurd prejudice"; he knew he would get more information, if he should require it, on that subject from other quarters. He paid his three months' rent, got a receipt, and the name of an old woman who would probably undertake to "do" for him, and came away with the keys in his pocket. He then went to the landlady of the inn, who was a cheerful and kindly person, and asked her advice as to such stores and provisions as he would be likely to require. She threw up her hands in amazement when he told her where he was going to settle himself.

"Not in the Judge's House!" she said, and grew pale as she spoke. He explained the locality of the house, saying that he did not know its name. When he had finished she answered:

"It is the Judge's House sure enough." He asked her to tell him about the place, why so called, and what there was against it. She told him that it was so called locally because it had once been the abode of a judge who was held in great terror on account of his harsh sentences and his hostility to prisoners at the Assizes. As to what there was against the house itself she could not tell. She had often asked, but no one could inform her; but there was a general feeling that there was *something*, and for her own part she would not stay in the house an hour by herself for all the money in the world. Then she apologized to Malcolmson for her disturbing talk.

"It is too bad of me, sir, and you—a young gentleman, too—if you will pardon me saying it, going to live there all alone. If you were my boy—and you'll excuse me for saying it—you wouldn't sleep there a night, not if I had to go there myself and pull the big alarm bell that's on the roof!"

The good creature was so clearly in earnest, and was so kindly in her intentions, that Malcolmson, although amused, was touched. He told her how much he appreciated her interest in him, and added:

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"But, my dear Mrs. Witham, indeed you need not be concerned about me! A man who is reading for the Mathematical Tripos has too much to think of to be disturbed by any of these mysterious 'somethings,' and his work is of too exact and prosaic a kind to allow him to have any corner in his mind for mysteries of any kind."

Mrs. Witham undertook to see after his provisions, and he went to look for the old woman who had been recommended to him.

When he returned to the Judge's House with her, he found Mrs. Witham herself waiting with several men and boys carrying parcels, and an upholsterer's man with a bed in a cart, for she said, though tables and chairs might be all very well, a bed that hadn't been aired for maybe fifty years was not proper for young bones to lie on. She was evidently curious to see the inside of the house; and though obviously she was so afraid of the 'somethings' that at the slightest sound she clutched on to Malcolmson, whom she never left for a moment, she went over the whole place.

After his examination of the house, Malcolmson decided to take up his abode in the great dining room, which was big enough to serve for all his requirements; and Mrs. Witham, with the aid of the charwoman, Mrs. Dempster, proceeded to arrange matters. When the hampers were brought in and unpacked, Malcolmson saw that with much kind forethought she had sent from her own kitchen sufficient provisions to last for several days. Before going she expressed all sorts of kind wishes; and at the door turned and said:

"And perhaps, sir, as the room is big and draughty it might be well to have one of those big screens put round your bed at night—though, truth to tell, I would die myself if I were to be so shut in with all kinds of—of 'things,' that put their heads round the sides, or over the top, and look on me!"

Mrs. Dempster sniffed in a superior manner as the landlady disappeared, and remarked that for her own part she wasn't afraid of all the bogies in the kingdom.

"I'll tell you what it is, sir," she said; "bogies is all kinds and sorts of things—except bogies! Rats and mice, and beetles; and creaky doors, and loose slates, and broken panes, and stiff drawer handles, that stay out when you pull them and then fall down in the middle of the night. Look at the wainscot of the room! It's old—hundreds of years old! Do you think there's no rats and beetles there! And do you imagine, sir, that you won't see none of them! Rats is bogies, I tell you, and bogies is rats; and don't you get to think anything else!"

"Mrs. Dempster," said Malcolmson gravely, "you know more than a Senior Wrangler! And let me say, that, as a mark of esteem for your soundness of head and heart, I shall, when I go, give you possession of this house, and let you stay here by yourself for the last

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two months of my tenancy, for four weeks will serve my purpose."

"Thank you kindly, sir!" she answered, "but I couldn't sleep away from home a night. I am in Greenhow's Charity, and if I slept a night away from my rooms I should lose all I have got to live on. The rules is very strict; and there's too many watching for a vacancy for me to run any risks in the matter. Only for that, sir, I'd gladly come here and attend on you altogether during your stay."

"My good woman," said Malcolmson hastily, "I have come here on purpose to obtain solitude; and believe me that I am grateful to the late Greenhow for having so organized his admirable charity—whatever it is—that I am denied the opportunity of suffering from such a form of temptation! Saint Anthony himself could not be more rigid on the point!"

The old woman laughed harshly. "Ah, you young gentlemen," she said, "you don't fear for naught; and belike you'll get all the solitude you want here." She set to work with her cleaning; and by nightfall, when Malcolmson returned from his walk, he found the room swept and tidied, a fire burning in the old hearth, the lamp lit, and the table spread for supper with Mrs. Witham's excellent fare. "This is comfort indeed," he said, as he rubbed his hands.

When he had finished his supper, and lifted the tray to the other end of the great oak dining-table, he got out his books again, put fresh wood on the fire, trimmed his lamp, and set himself down to a spell of real hard work. He went on without pause till about eleven o'clock, when he knocked off for a bit to fix his fire and lamp, and to make himself a cup of tea. He had always been a tea-drinker, and during his college life had sat late at work and had taken tea late. The renewed fire leaped and sparkled, and threw quaint shadows through the great old room; and as he sipped his hot tea he revelled in the sense of isolation from his kind.

Then it was that he began to notice for the first time what a noise the rats were making.

"Surely," he thought, "they cannot have been at it all the time I was reading. Had they been, I must have noticed it!" Presently, when the noise increased, he satisfied himself that it was really new. It was evident that at first the rats had been frightened at the presence of a stranger, and the light of fire and lamp; but that as the time went on they had grown bolder.

Up and down behind the old wainscot, over the ceiling and under the floor they raced, and gnawed, and scratched! Malcolmson smiled to himself as he recalled the saying of Mrs. Dempster, "Bogies is rats, and rats is bogies!" The tea began to have its effect of intellectual and nervous stimulus, and in the sense of security which it gave him, he allowed himself the luxury of a good look round.

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He took his lamp in one hand, and went all round, wondering that so quaint and beautiful an old house had been so long neglected. The carving of the oak on the panels of the wainscot was fine, and on and round the doors and windows it was beautiful and of rare merit. There were some old pictures on the walls, but they were coated so thick with dust and dirt that he could not distinguish any detail of them, though he held his lamp as high as he could over his head. Here and there as he went round he saw some crack or hole blocked for a moment by the face of a rat with its bright eyes glittering in the light, but in an instant it was gone, and a squeak and a scamper followed.

The thing that most struck him, however, was the rope of the great alarm bell on the roof, which hung down in a corner of the room on the right-hand side of the fireplace. He pulled up close to the hearth a great high-backed carved oak chair, and sat down to his last cup of tea. When this was done he made up the fire, and went back to his work, sitting at the corner of the table, having the fire to his left. For a while the rats disturbed him with their perpetual scampering, but he got accustomed to the noise as one does to the ticking of a clock or to the roar of moving water; and he became so immersed in his work that everything in the world, except the problem which he was trying to solve, passed away from him.

He suddenly looked up, his problem still unsolved. The noise of the rats had ceased. Indeed it seemed to him that it must have ceased but lately and that it was the sudden cessation which had disturbed him. The fire had fallen low, but still it threw out a deep red glow. As he looked he started.

There on the great high-backed carved oak chair by the right side of the fireplace sat an enormous rat, steadily glaring at him with baleful eyes. He made a motion to it as though to hunt it away, but it did not stir. Then he made the motion of throwing something. Still in did not stir, but showed its great white teeth angrily, and its cruel eyes shone in the lamplight with an added vindictiveness.

Malcolmson felt amazed, and seizing the poker from the hearth ran at it to kill it. Before, however, he could strike it, the rat, with a squeak that sounded like the concentration of hate, jumped to the floor, and, running up the rope of the alarm bell, disappeared in the darkness beyond the range of the green-shaded lamp. Instantly the noisy scampering of the rats in the wainscot began again.

By this time Malcolmson's mind was quite off the problem; and as a shrill cock-crow outside told him of the approach of morning, he went to bed and to sleep.

He slept so soundly that he was not even waked by Mrs. Dempster coming in to make up his room. It was only when she had tidied up the place and got his breakfast ready and tapped on the

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screen which closed in his bed that he woke. He was a little tired still after his night's hard work, but a strong cup of tea soon refreshed him and, taking his book, he went out for his morning walk, carrying with him a few sandwiches lest he should not care to return till dinner-time. He found a quiet walk between high elms some way outside the town, and here he spent the greater part of the day studying. On his return he looked in to see Mrs. Witham and to thank her for her kindness. When she saw him coming through the diamond-paned bay-window of her sanctum she came out to meet him and asked him in. She looked at him searchingly and shook her head as she said :

" You must not overdo it, sir. You are paler this morning than you should be. Too late hours and too hard work on the brain isn't good for any man ! But tell me, sir, how did you pass the night ? Well, I hope ? But, my heart ! sir, I was glad when Mrs. Dempster told me this morning that you were all right and sleeping sound when she went in."

" Oh, I was all right," he answered, smiling, " the ' somethings ' haven't worried me, yet. Only the rats ; and they had a circus, I tell you, all over the place. There was one wicked looking old devil that sat up on my own chair by the fire, and wouldn't go till I took the poker to him, and then he ran up the rope of the alarm bell and got to somewhere up the wall or the ceiling—I couldn't see where, it was so dark."

" Mercy on us," said Mrs. Witham, " an old devil, and sitting on a chair by the fireside ! Take care, sir ! Take care ! There's many a true word spoken in jest."

" How do you mean ? I don't understand."

" An old devil ! The old devil, perhaps. There ! sir, you needn't laugh," as Malcolmson smiled. " You young folks thinks it easy to laugh at things that makes older ones shudder. Never mind, sir ! Never mind ! Please God, you'll laugh all the time. It's what I wish you myself!" And the good lady beamed all over in sympathy with his enjoyment, her fears gone for a moment.

Malcolmson smiled to himself as he went home to dinner. It was an absurd idea.

This evening the scampering of the rats began earlier ; indeed it had been going on before his arrival, and only ceased whilst his presence by its freshness disturbed them. After dinner he sat by the fire for a while and had a smoke ; and then, having cleared his table, began to work as before.

Tonight the rats disturbed him more than they had done on the previous night. How they scampered up and down and under and over ! How they squeaked, and scratched, and gnawed ! How they, getting bolder by degrees, came to the mouths of their holes and to

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the chinks and cracks and crannies in the wainscoting till their eyes shone like tiny lamps as the firelight rose and fell.

But to him, now doubtless accustomed to them, their eyes were not wicked; only their playfulness touched him. Sometimes the boldest of them made sallies out on the floor or along the mouldings of the wainscot. Now and again as they disturbed him Malcolmson made a sound to frighten them, striking the table with his hand or giving a fierce "Hsh, hsh," so that they fled straightway to their holes.

And so the early part of the night wore on; and despite the noise Malcolmson got more and more immersed in his work.

All at once he stopped, as on the previous night, being overcome by a sudden sense of silence. There was not the faintest sound of gnaw, or scratch, or squeak. The silence was as of the grave. He remembered the odd occurrence of the previous night, and instinctively he looked at the chair standing close by the fireside. And then a very odd sensation thrilled through him.

There, on the great old high-backed carved oak chair beside the fireplace sat the same enormous rat, steadily glaring at him with baleful eyes.

Instinctively he took the nearest thing to his hand, a book of logarithms, and flung it. The book was badly aimed and the rat did not stir, so again the poker performance of the previous night was repeated; and again the rat, being closely pursued, fled up the rope of the alarm bell.

Strangely, too, the departure of this rat was instantly followed by the renewal of the noise made by the general rat community. On this occasion, as on the previous one, Malcolmson could not see at what part of the room the rat disappeared, for the green shade of his lamp left the upper part of the room in darkness, and the fire had burned low.

On looking at his watch he found it was close on midnight; and, not sorry for the *divertissement*, he made up his fire and made himself his nightly pot of tea. He had got through a good spell of work, and thought himself entitled to a cigarette; and so he sat on the great carved oak chair before the fire and enjoyed it. Whilst smoking he began to think that he would like to know where the rat disappeared to, for he had certain ideas for the morrow not entirely unconnected with a rat-trap.

Accordingly he lit another lamp and placed it so that it would shine well into the right-hand corner of the wall by the fireplace. Then he got all the books he had with him, and placed them handy to throw at the vermin. Finally, he lifted the rope of the alarm bell and placed the end of it on the table, fixing the extreme end under the lamp. As he handled it he could not help noticing how pliable it

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was, especially for so strong a rope, and one not in use.

"You could hang a man with it," he thought to himself. When his preparations were made he looked round, and said complacently:

"There now, my friend, I think we shall learn something of you this time!" He began his work again, and though as before somewhat disturbed at first by the noise of the rats, soon lost himself in his propositions and problems.

Again he was called to his immediate surroundings suddenly. This time it might not have been the sudden silence only which took his attention; there was a slight movement of the rope, and the lamp moved. Without stirring, he looked to see if his pile of books was within range, and then cast his eye along the rope. As he looked he saw the great rat drop from the rope to the oak armchair and sit there glaring at him. He raised a book in his right hand, and taking careful aim, flung it at the rat. The latter, with a quick movement, sprang aside and dodged the missile. He then took another book, and a third, and flung them one after another at the rat, but each time unsuccessfully.

At last, as he stood with a book poised in his hand to throw, the rat squeaked and seemed afraid. This made Malcolmson more than ever eager to strike, and the book flew and struck the rat a resounding blow. It gave a terrified squeak, and turning on its pursuer a look of terrible malevolence, ran up the chair-back and made a great jump to the rope of the alarm bell and ran up it like lightning. The lamp rocked under the sudden strain, but it was a heavy one and did not topple over. Malcolmson kept his eyes on the rat, and saw it by the light of the second lamp leap to a moulding of the wainscot and disappear through a hole in one of the great pictures which hung on the wall, obscured and invisible through its coating of dirt and dust.

"I shall look up my friend's habitation in the morning," he thought as he went over to collect his books. "The third picture from the fireplace; I shall not forget." He picked up the books one by one, commenting on them as he lifted them. "*Conic Sections* he does not mind, nor *Cycloidal Oscillations*, nor the *Principia*, nor *Quaternions*, nor *Thermodynamics*. Now for the book that fetched him!" Malcolmson took it up and looked at it. As he did so he started, and a sudden pallor overspread his face. He looked round uneasily and shivered slightly, as he murmured to himself:

"The Bible! What an odd coincidence." He sat down to work again, and the rats in the wainscot renewed their gambols. They did not disturb him, however; somehow their presence gave him a sense of companionship. But he could not attend to his work, and after striving to master the subject on which he was engaged gave it up in despair, and went to bed as the first streak of dawn stole in through the eastern window.

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He slept heavily but uneasily, and dreamed much; and when Mrs. Dempster woke him late in the morning he seemed ill at ease, and for a few minutes did not seem to realize exactly where he was. His first request rather surprised her.

"Mrs. Dempster, when I am out today I wish you would get the steps and dust or wash those pictures—specially that one the third from the fireplace—I want to see what they are."

Late in the afternoon Malcolmson worked at his books in the shaded walk, and the cheerfulness of the previous day came back to him as the day wore on, and he found that his reading was progressing well. He had worked out to a satisfactory conclusion all the problems which had as yet baffled him, and it was in a state of jubilation that he paid a visit to Mrs. Witham at *The Good Traveller*. He found a stranger in the cosy sitting room with the landlady, who was introduced to him as Dr. Thornhill. She was not quite at ease, and this, combined with the Doctor's plunging at once into a series of questions, made Malcolmson conclude that his presence was not an accident, so without preliminary, he said:

"Dr. Thornhill, I shall with pleasure answer any question you may choose to ask me if you will answer me one question first."

The Doctor seemed surprised, but he smiled and answered at once. "Done! What is it?"

"Did Mrs. Witham ask you to come here and see me and advise me?"

Dr. Thornhill for a moment was taken aback, and Mrs. Witham got fiery red and turned away; but the Doctor was a frank and ready man, and he answered at once and openly:

"She did: but she didn't intend you to know it. I suppose it was my clumsy haste that made you suspect. She told me that she did not like the idea of your being in that house all by yourself, and that she thought you took too much strong tea. In fact, she wants me to advise you if possible to give up the tea and the very late hours. I was a keen student in my time, so I suppose I may take the liberty, and without offence, advise you not quite as a stranger."

Malcolmson with a bright smile held out his hand. "I must thank you for your kindness and Mrs. Witham, too, and your kindness deserves a return on my part. I promise to take no more strong tea—no tea at all till you let me—and I shall go to bed tonight at one o'clock at the latest. Will that do?"

"Capital," said the Doctor. "Now tell us all that you noticed in the old house," and so Malcolmson then and there told in minute detail all that had happened in the last two nights. He was interrupted every now and then by some exclamation from Mrs. Witham, till finally when he told of the episode of the Bible the landlady's

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pent-up emotions found vent in a shriek; and it was not till a stiff glass of brandy and water had been administered that she grew composed again. Dr. Thornhill listened with a face of growing gravity, and when the narrative was complete and Mrs. Witham had been restored he asked:

"The rat always went up the rope of the alarm bell?"

"Always."

"I suppose you know," said the Doctor after a pause, "what the rope is?"

"No!"

"It is," said the Doctor slowly, "the very rope which the hangman used for all the victims of the Judge's judicial rancour!" Here he was interrupted by another scream from Mrs. Witham, and steps had to be taken for her recovery. Malcolmson having looked at his watch, and found that it was close to his dinner hour, had gone home before her complete recovery.

When Mrs. Witham was herself again she almost assailed the Doctor with angry questions as to what he meant by putting such horrible ideas into the poor young man's mind. "He has quite enough there already to upset him," she added. Dr. Thornhill replied:

"My dear madam, I had a distinct purpose in it! I wanted to draw his attention to the bell rope, and to fix it there. It may be that he is in a highly overwrought state, and has been studying too much, although I am bound to say that he seems as sound and healthy a young man, mentally and bodily, as ever I saw—but then the rats—and that suggestion of the devil." The Doctor shook his head and went on. "I would have offered to go and stay the first night with him but that I felt sure it would have been a cause of offence. He may get in the night some strange fright or hallucination; and if he does I want him to pull that rope. All alone as he is it will give us warning, and we may reach him in time to be of service. I shall be sitting up pretty late tonight and shall keep my ears open. Do not be alarmed if Benchurch gets a surprise before morning."

"Oh, Doctor, what do you mean? What do you mean?"

"I mean this; that possibly—nay, more probably—we shall hear the great alarm bell from the Judge's House tonight," and the Doctor hurriedly left the house.

When Malcolmson arrived home he found that it was a little after his usual time, and Mrs. Dempster had gone away—the rules of Greenhow's Charity were not to be neglected. He was glad to see that the place was bright and tidy with a cheerful fire and a well-trimmed lamp. The evening was colder than might have been expected in April, and a heavy wind was blowing with such rapidly

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increasing strength that there was every promise of a storm during the night.

For a few minutes after his entrance the noise of the rats ceased; but so soon as they became accustomed to his presence they began again. He was glad to hear them, for he felt once more the sense of companionship in their noise, and his mind ran back to the strange fact that they only ceased to show themselves when that other—the great rat with the baleful eyes—came upon the scene.

The reading-lamp only was lit and its green shade kept the ceiling and the upper part of the room in darkness, so that the cheerful light from the hearth spreading over the floor and shining on the white cloth laid over the end of the table was warm and cheery.

Malcolmson sat down to his dinner with a good appetite and a buoyant spirit. After his dinner and a cigarette he sat steadily down to work, determined not to let anything disturb him, for he remembered his promise to the doctor, and made up his mind to make the best of the time at his disposal.

For an hour or so he worked all right, and then his thoughts began to wander from his books. The actual circumstances around him, the calls on his physical attention, and his nervous susceptibility were not to be denied.

By this time the wind had become a gale. The old house, solid though it was, seemed to shake to its foundations, and then the storm roared and raged through its many chimneys and its queer old gables, producing strange, unearthly sounds in the empty rooms and corridors. Even the great alarm bell on the roof must have felt the force of the wind, for the rope rose and fell slightly, as though the bell were moved a little from time to time, and the limber rope fell on the oak floor with a hard and hollow sound.

As Malcolmson listened to it he thought of the doctor's words, "It is the rope which the hangman used for the victims of the Judge's judicial rancour," and he went over to the corner of the fireplace and took it in his hand to look at it. As he stood there he lost himself for a moment in speculation as to who these victims were, and the grim wish of the Judge to have such a ghastly relic ever under his eyes. As he stood there the swaying of the bell on the roof still lifted the rope now and again; but presently there came a new sensation—a sort of tremor in the rope, as though something was moving along it.

Looking up instinctively Malcolmson saw the great rat coming slowly down towards him, glaring at him steadily. He dropped the rope and started back with a muttered curse, and the rat turning ran up the rope again and disappeared, and at the same instant Malcolmson became conscious that the noise of the rats, which had ceased for a while, began again.

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It occurred to him that he had not investigated the lair of the rat or looked at the pictures, as he had intended. He lit the other lamp without the shade, and, holding it up, went and stood opposite the third picture from the fireplace on the right-hand side where he had seen the rat disappear on the previous night.

At the first glance he started back so suddenly that he almost dropped the lamp. His knees shook, and heavy drops of sweat came on his forehead, and he trembled violently. But he pulled himself together, and after the pause of a few seconds stepped forward again, raised the lamp, and examined the picture which had been dusted and washed, and now stood out clearly.

It was of a judge dressed in his robes of scarlet and ermine. His face was strong and merciless, evil, crafty and vindictive, with a sensual mouth, and hooked nose shaped like the beak of a bird of prey. The rest of the face was of a cadaverous colour. The eyes were of peculiar brilliance and with a terribly malignant expression. As he looked at them, Malcolmson grew cold, for he saw there the very counterpart of the eyes of the great rat. The lamp almost fell from his hand, he saw the rat with its baleful eyes peering out through the hole in the corner of the picture, and noted the sudden cessation of the noise of the other rats. However, he recovered himself, and went on with his examination of the picture.

The Judge was seated in a great high-backed carved oak chair, on the right-hand side of a great stone fireplace where, in the corner, a rope hung down from the ceiling, its end lying coiled on the floor. With a feeling of something like horror, Malcolmson recognized the scene of the room as it stood, and gazed around him in an awe-struck manner as though he expected to find some strange presence behind him. Then he looked over to the corner of the fireplace—and with a loud cry he let the lamp fall from his hand.

There, in the Judge's arm-chair, with the rope hanging behind, sat the rat with the Judge's baleful eyes, now intensified and with a fiendish leer. Save for the howling of the storm without there was silence.

The fallen lamp recalled Malcolmson to himself. Fortunately it was of metal, and so the oil was not spilt. However, the practical need of attending to it settled at once his nervous apprehensions. When he had turned it out, he wiped his brow and thought for a moment.

"This will not do," he said to himself. "If I go on like this I shall become a crazy fool. This must stop! I promised the Doctor I would not take tea. He was right! My nerves must have been getting into a queer state. Funny I did not notice it. I never felt better in my life. However, it is all right now, and I shall not be such a fool again."

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Then he mixed himself a good stiff glass of brandy and water and resolutely sat down to his work.

It was nearly an hour when he looked up from his book, disturbed by the sudden stillness. Without, the wind howled and roared louder than ever, and the rain drove in sheets against the windows, beating like hail on the glass; but within there was no sound whatever save the echo of the wind as it roared in the great chimney, and now and then a hiss as a few raindrops found their way down the chimney in a lull of the storm.

The fire had fallen low and had ceased to flame, though it threw out a red glow. Malcolmson listened attentively, and presently heard a thin, squeaking noise, very faint. It came from the corner of the room where the rope hung down, and he thought it was the creaking of the rope on the floor as the swaying of the bell raised and lowered it. Looking up, however, he saw in the dim light the great rat clinging to the rope and gnawing it. The rope was already nearly gnawed through—he could see the lighter colour where the strands were laid bare. As he looked the job was completed, and the severed end of the rope fell clattering on the oaken floor, whilst for an instant the great rat remained like a knob or tassel at the end of the rope, which now began to sway to and fro.

Malcolmson felt for a moment another pang of terror as he thought that now the possibility of calling the outer world to his assistance was cut off, but an intense anger took its place, and seizing the book he was reading he hurled it at the rat. The blow was well aimed, but before the missile could reach it the rat dropped off and struck the floor with a soft thud. Malcolmson instantly rushed over towards it, but it darted away and disappeared in the darkness of the shadows of the room.

Malcolmson felt that his work was over for the night, and determined then and there to vary the monotony of the proceedings by a hunt for the rat, he took off the green shade of the lamp so as to insure a wider spreading light. As he did so the gloom of the upper part of the room was relieved, and in the new flood of light, great by comparison with the previous darkness, the pictures on the wall stood out boldly. From where he stood, Malcolmson saw right opposite to him the third picture on the wall from the right of the fireplace. He rubbed his eyes in surprise, and then a great fear began to come upon him.

In the centre of the picture was a great irregular patch of brown canvas, as fresh as when it was stretched on the frame. The background was as before, with chair and chimney-corner and rope, but the figure of the Judge had disappeared.

Malcolmson, almost in a chill of horror, turned slowly round, and then he began to shake and tremble like a man in a palsy.

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His strength seemed to have left him, and he was incapable of action or movement, hardly even of thought. He could only see and hear.

There, on the great high-backed carved oak chair sat the Judge in his robes of scarlet and ermine, with his baleful eyes glaring vindictively, and a smile of triumph on the resolute, cruel mouth, as he lifted with his hands a *black cap*.

Malcolmson felt as if the blood was running from his heart, as one does in moments of prolonged suspense. There was a singing in his ears. Outside, he could hear the roar and howl of the tempest, and through it, swept on the storm, came the striking of midnight by the great chimes in the market place. He stood for a space of time that seemed to him endless, still as a statue and with wide open horror-struck eyes, breathless. As the clock struck, so the smile of triumph on the Judge's face intensified, and at the last stroke of midnight he placed the black cap on his head.

Slowly and deliberately the Judge rose from his chair and picked up the piece of the rope of the alarm bell which lay on the floor, drew it through his hands as if he enjoyed its touch, and then deliberately began to knot one end of it, fashioning it into a noose. This he tightened and tested with his foot, pulling hard at it till he was satisfied and then making a running noose of it, which he held in his hand. Then he began to move along the table on the opposite side to Malcolmson, keeping his eyes on him until he had passed him, when with a quick movement he stood in front of the door.

Malcolmson then began to feel that he was trapped, and tried to think of what he should do. There was some fascination in the Judge's eyes, which he never took off him, and he had, perforce, to look. He saw the Judge approach—still keeping between him and the door—and raise the noose and throw it towards him as if to entangle him. With a great effort he made a quick movement to one side, and saw the rope fall beside him, and heard it strike the oaken floor. Again the Judge raised the noose and tried to ensnare him, ever keeping his baleful eyes fixed on him, and each time by a mighty effort Malcolmson just managed to evade it.

So this went on for many times, the Judge seeming never discouraged nor discomposed at failure, but playing as a cat does with a mouse. At last in despair, which had reached its climax, Malcolmson cast a quick glance round him. The lamp seemed to have blazed up, and there was a fairly good light in the room. At the many rat-holes and in the chinks and crannies of the wainscot he saw the rats' eyes; and this aspect, that was purely physical, gave him a gleam of comfort. He looked around and saw that the rope of the great alarm bell was laden with rats. Every inch of it

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was covered with them, and more and more were pouring through the small circular hole in the ceiling whence it emerged, so that with their weight the bell was beginning to sway.

Hark! it had swayed till the clapper had touched the bell. The sound was but a tiny one, but the bell was only beginning to sway, and it would increase.

At the sound the Judge, who had been keeping his eyes fixed on Malcolmson, looked up, and a scowl of diabolical anger overspread his face. His eyes fairly glowed like hot coals, and he stamped his foot with a sound that seemed to make the house shake. A dreadful peal of thunder broke overhead as he raised the rope again, whilst the rats kept running up and down the rope as though working against time. This time, instead of throwing it, he drew close to his victim, and held open the noose as he approached.

As he came closer there seemed something paralysing in his very presence, and Malcolmson stood rigid as a corpse. He felt the Judge's icy fingers touch his throat as he adjusted the rope. The noose tightened—tightened. Then the Judge, taking Malcolmson's rigid form in his arms, carried him over and placed him standing in the oak chair, and stepping up beside him, put his hand up and caught the end of the swaying rope of the alarm bell. As he raised his hand the rats fled squeaking, and disappeared through the hole in the ceiling. Taking the end of the noose which was round Malcolmson's neck he tied it to the hanging bell-rope, and then descending pulled away the chair.

When the alarm bell of the Judge's House began to sound a crowd soon assembled. Lights and torches of various kinds appeared, and soon a silent crowd was hurrying to the spot. They knocked loudly at the door, but there was no reply. Then they burst in the door, and poured into the great dining room, the doctor at the head.

There at the end of the rope of the great alarm bell hung the body of Malcolmson, and on the face of the Judge in the picture was a malignant smile.

* * *

MONOPOLY

An American tourist refused to be too greatly impressed with the masterpieces at the Louvre. "We've got plenty of priceless canvasses in the United States, too," he declared.

"I know," said his guide. "Rembrandt painted seven hundred pictures in his lifetime, and America has all ten thousand of them."

Told by BENNETT CERF

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LOVE-SONG

I confess that I love this woman; if that is a sin, I confess that also

TERENCE, *2nd Century B.C.*

Brother John went out early this morning and did not return all day and night. He is gone a Courting . . .

JAMES WOODFORDE,
Diary of a Country Parson, December 4th, 1765

Us Can but Troi

" If I consent to be your bride,
Pray how for me will you provide? "
" Oi'll give you all Oi have, Oi 'm sure,
What can a poor vellow do fur ye more? "
With my doombledum, dollykin, doombledum day.

" Fur Oi can reap and Oi can sow,
And Oi can plough and Oi can hoe ;
Oi goes to market wi' vather's hay,
And earns me ninepence every day."
With my doombledum, dollykin, doombledum day.

" Ninepence a day would never do,
For I must have silks and satins too ;
'Twill ne'er be enough for you and I."
" Oh coom," says Herchard, " Us can but troi."
With my doombledum, dollykin, doombledum day.

Somersetshire Folk Song

Phenomenon

Grover Stetson was driving through the country in his automobile when he discovered that the water tank was almost empty. As he was about to pass a farmhouse, he went into the yard to get some water. He saw there was a cistern a few feet from the kitchen addition to the residence. There was a large elm tree that spread its branches over the cistern and extended up the side of the roof of the building.

Eva, the farmer's daughter, eighteen years old, educated and

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industrious, had climbed from the attic of the main building out on to the kitchen roof, where she was spreading sliced apples to dry in the sun. At the moment that Grover was stooping over to draw up the bucket to which a rope was attached for drawing water from the cistern, Eva's foot slipped and she glided rapidly and noiselessly down the roof.

The first perception Grover had of anything extraordinary was realized when he said to himself, "I have not seen her face nor heard her voice, but she, whose little right foot is in my right coat pocket and whose left foot is in my left coat pocket, with her arms around my neck, is the rest of myself."

DR. A. A. LINDSAY,
Chemistry, Electricity and Psychology of Love

Where None Will Think to Look—

There is no shadow in the wood
But kisses have sown violets there :
There is no grave deep solitude
But once has jocund laughed
At lovers, kissing-daft,
Who prankt with gold the air.

So leave the butter in the churn
And leave your hat upon the hook,
To taste amid the knee-deep fern
This sky-blue junketing
Of air and earth and spring
Where none will think to look.

FRANCIS CROSSLEY

Declaration

You do not love me. I accept as final your hint that you will never love me. I need not say—could not, indeed, ever say—how deeply, deeply you have pained. As lover I am rejected. But that rejection is no stopper to my suit. It does but drive me to the use of arguments. My pride shrinks from them. Love, however, is greater than pride: and I, John, Albert, Edward, Claude, Orde, Angus, Tankerton, Tanville-Tankerton, fourteenth Duke of Dorset, Marquis of Dorset, Earl of Grove, Earl of Chastermaine, Viscount Brewsby, Baron Grove, Baron Petstrap, and Baron Wolock, in the Peerage of England, offer you my hand.

MAX BEERBOHM, *Zuleika Dobson*

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Pastorale

The Yellow-haired Laddie sat down on yon brae,
Cries—Milk the ewes, Lassie ! let nane o' them gae !
And ay she milked, and ay she sang—
The Yellow-haired Laddie shall be my gudeman !
And ay she milked, and ay she sang—
The Yellow-haired Laddie shall be my gudeman !

ALLAN RAMSAY, 1686-1758

Nurgihan Sighs for the Girl of China—

He would not leave the garden until he had visited a delightful pavilion, built of Yemen carnelians, which stood beside the water. Entering, he found himself in a high hall, containing an ivory bed studded with jewels and shaded by artfully-embroidered curtains. He opened these curtains with his hand and stood spellbound at the sight of a tender girl, who lay couched upon cushions with no vest or ornament save beauty.

She slept deeply, little knowing that a human gaze had pierced the veil of her mystery . . .

This was none other than Lily-Brow, the girl of China, and the sight of her nakedness cast Nurgihan to the floor in a swoon. When, at length, he came to himself with a cold sigh, he whispered in the sleeping ear of the princess :

They would sell silks to me,
But I came by your bed
And with my fingers tested the dark subtlety
Of your hair instead . . .
You sleep on purple tissue ;
Surely to me
Your face is the fair issue
Of dawn from thence
And your light eyes the excellence
Of stars above the sea.

Tale of the Sea Rose of the Girl of China, translated by POWYS MATHERS

For Ever and Ever

And o'er the hills and far away
Beyond their utmost purple rim,
Beyond the night, across the day,
Thro' all the world she follow'd him.

ALFRED, LORD TENNYSON, 1809-1892

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WIFE DECEIVER

**"Two women in a house," she said,
"is one too many"**

by STUART CLOETE

WHEN Piet Mostert was faced with a problem, he lit his pipe and went to sit under the big milkbush to the right of his house and sat there smoking till it was solved. It was a very big pipe—a calabash fastened to its stem by a silver mounting—that his father had given him on his twenty-first birthday. His old father had said, "Do not be in a hurry, Piet. Tomorrow is also a day. You must not be rough or hasty with a difficulty. When you have a problem, take your pipe and sit with it under a tree and court it as if it were a young girl."

And that was how Piet had got his big pipe, his Problem Solver, and that was why he took it from its blue-velvet-lined case today—because he had a trouble, a big one.

This time it was a girl. A very small girl, but very perfect, like a little *steenbok*. She was beautiful. He was in love with her. And this was the problem. A year ago, no one, not even he himself, had been interested in little Francina, and now everyone seemed to be.

It was as if a woman ripened like a fruit. For years she was there, a child, just as the unripe fruit was there, and no one wanted her. And then suddenly she was ripe. The fruit glowed richly in the sunshine, its cheeks were red, it was warm, it was covered with a glorious bloom, and all who saw it stretched out their hands towards it.

Slowly he lowered his great bulk on to the bench and, taking a flint and steel from his pocket, struck a spark to the tinder, blew it up and lit his pipe. The lighting of this pipe was a ceremony. It bore in his mind some relation to going to church. To smoke it was in a sense a kind of prayer, a means by which one dealt with material problems which it would be unseemly to take to the house of God.

This was not a problem for God, because if it was, all the others would also be praying to the Almighty to give them Francina, and it seemed to him that such prayers would be embarrassing for the Lord, putting him, as it were, into a quandary. Now, if she

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were sick, they could all pray for her to get well—that was something else. The Lord would have no difficulty in pleasing all by curing her. There were to his mind some things which one took to God, and others which one dealt with oneself.

The smoke rose from his pipe, and he turned over slowly all the aspects of the case. She liked him. *Ja*, she liked many men. He was not poor, but others were even less poor. He, Piet, was not bad looking, but others were better looking. There was only one way in which he was outstanding. He was big. *Magtig*, he said to himself, *I am bigger and stronger than them all.* But would this appeal to so small a woman? Would it seem good to her that he could lift a two hundred pound bag of mealies from a wagon as if it were a parcel or throw an ox with a twist of his wrist? It might even frighten her.

He said to himself, *I must make a plan.* That was always the Boer way. But no doubt all the others were making plans too. They were also farmers—Boers. It must therefore be the best plan of them all. Then, turning his mind inside out as if it were a rabbit he was skinning, he took Francina's point of view and tried to think what she liked best.

What Francina liked best was her widowed mother. It was what most people liked least. Mevrouw Fourie was also small, also like a fruit in a way. She was like an apple that is wrinkled with age and has turned sour. Everyone knew this except Francina. Nevertheless, her mother was the key to the plan. This was the weak link in the chain of her life, and this evening he would saddle his best riding horse and go over and see Francina and Mevrouw Fourie. He would not offer marriage. Instead he would ask Mevrouw Fourie if she would be happy in his house.

"*Ja*," he thought, "if to get Francina I must take the mother, then I must take both. It is like trying to buy the good one of a pair of horses. No man will sell it alone. What one must do is to buy the cart and all—cart, harness, horses, lock, stock and barrel. Make a good offer and he will be tempted. To try to buy one of the pair alone will meet with nothing but trouble. *Ja*," he thought, "it's the mother I must have. The old mother, with her pretty daughter running like a foal at foot."

The plan, then, was divided into two parts, and this was the first part. The weakest part of the girl was her love for her mother. The weakest part of the mother was cooking. She was a wonderful cook. He puffed at his pipe. She loved to cook, so he would tempt her with a new stove. And he laughed. If the pill was bitter, it was at least sugared, because however much his heart suffered from her tongue, his belly would be filled with contentment, and it was hard to make a man who was well fed unhappy.

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He looked at the sun. It was beginning to fall in the sky. In three hours it would be evening. It would take him an hour to ride over. Hard as it would be to do, he must ride slowly, so as not to get hot and untidy.

He was too excited with his plan to eat. And he would wash. *Magtig*, he would wash all over, not just his face and hands and wrists. This was an occasion, and upon an occasion a man should wash all over. He would put brilliantine on his hair and stink like a bed of violets. Women liked such things, and it would be an indication not only of his delicate habits but also of his intentions. A man did not come slowly on his best chestnut horse wearing his Sunday clothes and smelling of violets for nothing.

Somehow, he must bring his bath into the conversation—delicately, of course—perhaps saying how good it felt to wash all over, or he could say, " Now I know how fine a cow feels when she has been through the dip." Mevrouw Fourie would say, " Why, Piet ? " And that would give him his opening.

Little Francina, of course, would say nothing. But she would be all big blue eyes and little pink ears, taking everything in. And when he had gone she would chatter to her mother about what had been said and what it had meant. A young girl, however desirable she might be, was nothing till she was married and a mother.

But he wanted her, and he hoped she would turn out well. That was in the hands of the Almighty, who saw to such things, and he was very hopeful of being happy with her. At least he was very unhappy without her, for his heart cried for her, and the vision of her form and her heart-shaped face with big blue eyes, like pansies, was always before him.

The Problem Solver had worked again. He scraped the tobacco out of his pipe and got up to catch his chestnut horse. He saddled and bridled it and tied it to a ring let into the wall outside the door. Now everything was ready. He must shave and bath, and feed the poultry, and then he could be off. He put the water on the stove to heat. He laid his clothes out on the bed. He got the bottle of brilliantine out of the chest, loosened the cork and smelled it. *Magtig*, it was good and strong. Smelling it, one could almost see the violets. He put his big hand into the water. It was getting warm. Another ten minutes would do it. He got out the tin bath with two handles that he used for washing his clothes, and the soap.

So it went. The bath, the shirt, the socks, the Sunday clothes, the oil on the hair, and his best hat with a feather from a peacock's breast in it. Even the horse, Rooiland, seemed to know it was an occasion, and was calm when he mounted him and neither reared

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nor plunged. He rode all the way at a very slow canter, riding with the Boer seat, his long legs stretched out in front of him.

As he went along he made plans of what he would say, and composed beautiful speeches. But when he got to the Fouries' house and Francina came to the door, he forgot them all.

"I have come to visit," he said.

Francina said, "It is good to have visitors. Put up your horse and come in and have coffee."

He took off his saddle, leaning it against the wall of the house. He hung his bridle on a nail, knee-haltered his horse and went in.

"Have some coffee," Mevrouw Fourie said. "It is good to make coffee for a man again."

"*Baie dankie*—thank you *mevrouw*," he said. "It is good for a man to have coffee made for him. It is not a man's business to make coffee, and since my mother died I have made many thousands of cups. *Nie*," he said, "it is not good to be an orphan and alone in the world."

"You are a very big orphan," Francina said, tossing back her yellow hair.

"Size, Francina," he said, "has nothing to do with it. The world is a sad and lonely place for orphans, big or small."

The conversation was going well, and he could start on the stove at once.

"What I need," he said, "is a new stove. I should like a fine one with knobs that shine and a copper hot water tank in its belly, so that I can have a hot bath easily. But what good is a fine stove to a man who is alone? An orphan," he sighed. "In fact, that is partly why I came over."

"You came to see Francina, as all the young men do," Mevrouw Fourie said.

"I came to see Francina because she is a pretty thing and sweet to look upon, but to you also I came, because I had something in my heart to say to you. I said to myself, 'Piet, here you are alone and an orphan. And there is the Widow Fourie with no man to take care of.'"

"*Ja*," she said, "and what did you then say to yourself?"

"Then I said to myself, 'Put on your Sunday suit, go and see Mevrouw Fourie and say to her, "Come and be a mother to me and I will be a son to you."' Come," he said, "and I will buy a fine new stove. One that will cost as much as a hundred pounds if you like—you shall choose it for yourself. I will also, with iron pipes, lay water on to the very back door, thus offering you every convenience of the modern world such as we read about in the papers."

"And Francina," Mevrouw Fourie said, "what of her?"

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"She can come, too," he said. "It will be a pleasure to see so young and frisky a girl about the place."

"And my house?" Mevrouw Fourie said.

"*Ja*," he said, "your place. That I have thought of too. It is too big for you. Sell it and invest in a house in the village that will bring you in rent every month."

"I see you have made many plans," the widow said, "for my comfort and future."

"*Nie*," he said, "they are plans for both of us. For you who have no man to take care of, and for me who am without a mother to cherish."

"Have more coffee," she said.

"Thank you," he said, and pushed his cup towards her.

Then she said, "Piet, many men have come seeking Francina because she is young and pretty, like a ripe plum on a bush. But I tell them she holds fast by her stem to the tree that is her mother, and then they go away. But you come and offer me a stove and water from a tap, and I am tempted. *Ja*," she said, "I am very tempted."

"It is your heart that is touched by my plight," he said. "Your kind mother's heart." He paused and blew his nose on his big red handkerchief. "I am so moved," he said, "that I am speechless. One does not find a mother every day. *Nie*," he said, "a good mother does not grow on bushes by the wayside, and not often is a poor orphan's heart rejoiced like mine.

"*Mevrouw*," he said, "if I have found a mother on this beautiful evening, you have found a son to clasp to your bosom, and this I promise before God: that no woman shall have a better son than you or for that matter a finer stove or better running tap. *Ja*," he said, "I am so moved that I must go, for I am near to tears. Struck dumb and near to tears," he said. And with that he got up and went out, leaving a smell of violets behind him.

He caught his horse, saddled up and rode off. It was done. The seed was planted, and it looked to him as if it had started to sprout at once. He laughed. And not a word had he said to Francina. Not even goodbye. And in the meantime she would think of him and toss her head in anger. That he would put right later. But it would not be hard to court the girl when he had her mother in the house, tending to her new stove like a child.

"If you catch the old hen," he thought, "the chick will follow." And the old hen was trapped, for he had offered her more than anyone else in the valley—all the comforts of the modern world. And he was known as a man who kept his word.

That night he wrote to all the big stores in Cape Town, painfully,

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in large letters, describing his wants, explaining that money was no object, and would they send him books with pictures. A week later they came, four books with pictures in colour; and, mounting his horse again, he carried them over to the Widow Fourie.

"Here," he said, "are the pictures, mother mine. Choose the one you like best, no matter what it costs, for a mother is like rubies, and beyond price." And he waited while with wetted finger Mevrouw Fourie turned the pages.

At last she stopped and pointed with a work worn forefinger at a coloured picture. This stove was beautiful even to him. It was of white enamel and silver, with a copper tap for the boiler on the left hand side.

She pointed to the price—one hundred and four pounds with four lengths of piping included. "It is not too much?" she asked.

"It is a great price," he said. "The price of thirty sheep, but what are sheep compared to my mother's happiness? Bring a paper and pen," he said, "and we will write at once."

"You mean it?" she asked.

"I am a man of my word," he said. "I will buy it, if you will promise to come and sit beside it, and cook my meals, and make me coffee, and hot water for my bath."

That was a delicate touch, he thought; it showed him to be a superior man, one prepared to suffer for the sake of cleanliness. "Cleanliness is said to be next to godliness," he said. He looked down at his hands, and seeing the black fingernails, took out his pocketknife and cleaned them.

"I will live in your house till you get married," Mevrouw Fourie said.

"And why not after it?" he said.

"It is not good to have two women in a house," she said.

Francina had left the room a few moments before. Piet put his hand upon Mevrouw Fourie's arm. "Not even mother and daughter?" he said.

"Francina?" she said.

"*Ja*, Francina, when she is a little older. *Magtig*, even if she were not beautiful, I would marry her to keep my new mother with me. I am a child at heart," he said. "I need a mother's care more than a wife's. *Ja*," he said. "*Ja*, a lonely orphan that needs a ma."

A month later the stove was set up, the Fourie place sold, a cottage in Zonder Rivier bought with the money and rented almost at once, and Mevrouw Fourie was making her first cup of coffee in the kitchen of Piet Mostert's house while Francina skipped like a lamb from one room to another.

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This was better than men just coming to visit and sitting like bumps on a log while they devoured her with their eyes. Here was a man always about. A man who was devoted to her mother. A man who washed every day and was piously inclined. A good man, a big man, a strong man with a good farm and no debts. One who could, without batting an eyelid, pay a hundred and four pounds for a stove and lay water on to the very door of the kitchen.

All day, when he was out working, her mother sang his praises. And all the evening he sang her mother's praises. Praising the way she kept the house, the way she cooked, the way she washed and ironed his clothes. Never was there a happier household, so that when, after not more than three months, he proposed marriage to Francina, she accepted him willingly, for by now she loved him. It was his devotion to her mother that had really settled the question. The other men who had courted her had not understood her mother.

The marriage was a gay affair with much meat and drink. There was a barbecue in which an ox was cooked with hot coals in a pit outside, a dance in the big wagon shed, with six musicians, and coffee by the gallon for those who did not drink Boer wine or brandy. People came in wagons and carts, some even came with motor cars. It was summer, and they brought tents, and for a week Mooiplaats was a camp.

Then it was silent again. They inspanned their horses and oxen, they cranked up their old cars and left in commandos, trekking back in groups to their own homes, after what everyone described as the best wedding they had been to for many years, with the sweetest bride and the finest or certainly the biggest bridegroom in those parts. The decoration flowers and ferns round the door were taken down, and nothing was left but the residue of the campers —bones and paper, a few rags, and, curiously enough, hung together in a fig tree, some empty bottles and cans.

Now they were alone. And now was the time for the Problem Solver to come out of its blue-velvet-lined leather case again. "Why are you carrying that great pipe?" Francina asked.

"My heart, this is the pipe of necessity. It was given me by my old father, and I only smoke it on special occasions."

"And what is the occasion, Piet?" Francina asked. He could see she thought it funny.

"The occasion is a problem I must solve," he told her. For only the first part of Piet's plan was executed. He had Francina, whom he loved more every day, but he also had her mother, whom he disliked more every day. To tell her to go would not only be a

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breach of faith but would also turn Francina against him. Therefore, a new plan must be thought of. To this end, he sat under the great milkbush for an hour and smoked three pipefuls of strong tobacco.

At first nothing came and he was depressed because he did not see how he could live with Mevrouw Fourie for ever. And then he had an idea. *Magtig*, it made him laugh, it was so simple. The idea was to go on as he had been doing. Only more so. He called it in his mind the weaning plan, for by it he would wean Francina from her mother. He would begin at once.

His chance came that night. Francina had cooked the supper, as she did sometimes, and he said, " Francina, this is good. *Magtig*, it is good, but none of the young girls of today can cook like their mothers. And that is why I am such a fortunate man, having a splendid wife who is the joy of my heart and a mother by adoption who understands the desires of a man's stomach."

Francina pouted and said nothing for the rest of the evening. He thought how beautiful she was when she sulked with her lower lip pushed out like a little pink pig trough under the white mealy grains of her teeth. " *Magtig*," he thought, " she is angry, and it is good."

The following week he went to Zonder Rivier and bought an embroidered shawl for his mother-in-law. For Francina he bought two yards of pink ribbon.

" What shall I do with it ? " she asked.

" I do not know," he said, " but I thought young girls liked ribbon."

" I am a married woman," she said, " and I like shawls and clothes."

Then he said, " I know, my heart, but spending money is short, and I only had enough for one, which I felt must go to our mother. To myself I said, ' Only the best for my mother.' "

Mevrouw Fourie was more than pleased. Her new son never went to town without bringing back something nice for her. Three pillowslips of real linen, perfumed soap for her face, a kettle from America that had a whistle in it that blew when it boiled.

He bought things for Francina, too. But they were such things as children like—sweets and ribbons, and once a picture book, and it was always her mother that he spoke of first and asked how she liked his present, and said if only he could afford it he would buy her more.

She was an acquisitive woman, a collector of things, a hoarder, and he pampered her desires, and all the time inside he laughed, for winter was coming and he had a plan for the winter.

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It came with a bang in May, with a great northwester. And mounting his horse, he rode through it and came back with a big coat of camel's hair for his mother-in-law.

"*Ja*," he said, "for the money I paid for this I could have bought two less good coats, but I thought my mother must have the best. Francina has an old coat, and her blood is young and hot. It is the old that must be cherished. That was my promise to you. I promised that I should be a good son to you. As good or better than if I was born of your bone and blood."

"No woman could ask for a better son," Mevrouw Fourie said.

But Francina said nothing. It was then, in the cold days that followed, that the leaven he had kneaded into the dough of his marriage began to work. It worked so well that Mevrouw Fourie began to complain to him of Francina, saying, "It is a strange thing that you who are not of my blood are so good to me, and Francina, who was so sweet and docile in her girlhood, is now bad tempered and fractious. Sometimes I fear marriage has not improved her. How is she with you, my dear son?"

"Sometimes with me she is quick tempered and angry," he said, "but I console myself by saying, 'Piet, if your wife is sometimes angry, that is not the case with your ma, who is sweet as honey all the time. And a man cannot have everything in life, for all have a cross of some kind to bear.'"

"*Ja*," Piet thought, "she is coming to the boil." Like a pretty little pot on the fire, his little Francina was simmering with anger. It hurt him to see it, but it made him laugh to watch her mother swallowing his gifts and complaining about her daughter.

"Nothing but the very best for my ma. That was my promise," he said, "and throughout the valley I am known as a man of my word."

Indeed, he was keeping his word, and Francina was beginning to see that what was happening now was only what had happened all her life. She began to see that her mother was a hard, selfish woman with a passion to dominate all who came near her. It made her blood boil to see him give in to her mother, to hear him say, "Yes, ma," and "No, ma," bleating like a sheep.

She said as much to him. "You are not a man," she said; "you are a great woolly lamb. Everything my mother wants, you do."

"Is that not what I promised?" he asked. "Is that not why you married me in preference to another?"

"But this is going too far. I am nothing in my own house. *Nie*," she said, "it is my mother you should have married."

"I did not wish to marry your mother. But, my heart, I will

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tell you a secret."

"A secret?" she said.

"*Ja*, a secret."

"What is it?"

"You must promise not to be angry," he said.

"I promise," she said.

"I did once think of marrying her." And this was not a lie, for he had thought how terrible it would be to be married to Maria Fourie.

Francina said, "I wish you had, sometimes."

"I am glad I did not," he said, "for this way I have all the advantages. I have her cooking, and her property will one day come to you, and I have you for a wife—the fairest maiden in the valley."

She stamped her foot on the floor. "All men are brutes and beasts!" she said. "Lower than the beasts of the field! But you, Piet, are the worst!"

"*Nie*," he said, "I am not so bad; there are worse, and everything will come right one day."

"It will not come right till my mother goes."

"How can she go, since I have my word?"

"I gave no word," she said. "Before God I will get her out of the house! It is a man's duty to cling to his wife and not to his mother-in-law."

"I gave my word," he said.

"Your word will break my heart!"

"You must not speak like that," he said. "It is wicked. Your mother is a fine woman."

"*Ja*, she is fine, but she will be equally fine somewhere else. She will be as fine in her house in the *dorp* that is rented by the month."

"We could go and see her," he said. "On Sundays we could go after church and she would cook dinner for us."

"Did I marry a man or a stomach?" Francina said. "A man. No, not a man. A sheep with the ravenous belly of a wolf."

"I am going to see to the horses," Piet said, and left her. He was very proud of her. What spirit she had! What beauty! He patted Rooiland's neck and said to him, "What a wife! What a fine little wife I have!"

That evening his mother-in-law came to him as he sat on the stoop and said, "Piet, something has happened that I never believed possible."

"*Ja*," he said, "and what is that?"

"I have nourished a viper in my bosom," she said. "My

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daughter has turned against me and I am going to live in my house in the village."

Piet said, "This is something I cannot understand, for she loves you so much and I have done my best to make you content. *Ja*," he said, "I promised to be a son to you, and that I have been, and will be wherever you are."

"You cannot make me stay here, Piet."

"*Nie*," he said, "you cannot stay, and I was wrong when I said two women could live in the same house, even if they were mother and daughter. But at least if you have lost a daughter you have gained a son."

"*Ja*," she said, "a fine son."

"And we will eat dinner with you on Sundays after church. It will be like old times," he said. He made his big face look sad. He also wiped his eyes with his red cotton handkerchief. "It is not my fault," he said. "I have done my part."

"*Ja*," she said, "you have done your part."

For some days after Mevrouw Fourie had gone, Francina and he spoke very little. And then came the day when he drove her to the *dorp*. He drove to the garage and told Francina to get out. And leaving a boy to hold the horses, they went into the office.

"We wish to see a motor car," he said. "A new one with shiny parts like a stove. I am buying it for my wife."

"Piet," Francina said.

"*Ja*," he said.

"Have we the money?" she asked.

"I have it here," he said, and pulled out a canvas bag from his pocket.

"Then ma—" she said. "And the coat you could not afford to give me, and the shawl with embroidery on it, and all the other things—"

"Here is the car for you," the salesman said.

"Will it go?" Piet asked.

"Of course it will go."

"Then make it go and we will drive round the *dorp* and astonish the neighbours."

In the car, Francina took his hand. "You are a *slim kerel*," she said. "A smart and clever man."

"I am a woolly sheep," he said; "an innocent orphan lamb."

Francina laughed and then burst into tears. He patted her arm.

"You do not want her back," he said.

She looked at him with big eyes.

"We will have dinner with her on Sundays after church," he

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said, " and if it is a girl, we will call her Maria Francina."

" What a plan," Francina said, " and what a man. *Magtig*, how you tricked me, Piet Mostert, into loving you."

" *Ja*, I tricked you."

" And then tricked me into getting rid of my mother after you had tricked her into bringing me into your house."

" *Ja*," he said, " I tricked her, and are you not glad ? "

" I am glad," she said. " But now you must let me keep the big pipe, and when there is a problem we will sit together while you smoke it under the great *melkbos*."

" We will sit together, my heart, all the days of our lives. And although I did not like your mother to begin with, I like her now, for she has taken this business well. It is just as she said in the beginning : ' Two women cannot agree in one house.' "

" Not when there is a man like you in it," Francina said.

" *Ja*," he said, " that is true ; one woman is enough for me."

He touched the driver on the shoulder and said, " Make it go fast. I wish to speed through the air, for my heart is happy. I have a good and beautiful wife, a fine farm up in the mountains, a fine new car, and a baby on the way."

" Then you'll take it," the man said.

" *Ja*, I'll take it. For I have heard the breed well spoken of, and I will buy it as a gift for my wife."

* * *

UMBRAGE TAKEN

Three tortoises had foregathered in a country inn—a mature tortoise of about two hundred years, a middle-aged tortoise of about one hundred and twenty, and an infant tortoise, who had barely turned forty five. " Oh bother ! " said the oldest tortoise suddenly. " I must have left my hat at that last bar we visited."

" I'll get it for you," volunteered the infant tortoise, graciously.

The two older tortoises resumed their conversation.

Two weeks later they had scarcely shifted their positions at the bar. Tortoise Senior suddenly said, " By the way, I wonder where that baby tortoise is. I'll bet he never got my hat."

" You simply can't depend on that child," agreed his companion. " He certainly ought to be back by this time."

Just then the voice of the baby tortoise came from the next room. " I heard you," he said angrily, " and just for that I won't go another step ! "

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CONQUERORS' ISLE

"It would be the end of our world," he said

by NELSON BOND

"YOU'VE got to believe this," said Brady. He spoke with tense, white-knuckled ferocity, his eyes intent on those of the older man. "It sounds utterly impossible, I know. It sounds—well, it sounds crazy. That's why I'm here. But it's the truth, and you've got to believe it! *Got* to—sir," he finished, belatedly acknowledging his listener's seniority.

Group Commander Gorham said quietly: "Steady does it, Lieutenant. I'm here to consult with you as a physician, not order your cure as a superior officer. Suppose we ignore the braid while you tell me about it?"

Joe Brady smiled. It was his first smile in weeks, and his face could not quite accomplish it. His lips twisted jerkily, but his eyes remained blank windows into torment.

He said: "Thank you, Doctor. Where would you like me to begin?"

Gorham shuffled the pages of the lieutenant's case history. Random excerpts telescoped three years of spotless if not spectacular service:

Brady, Joseph Travers . . . Age: 29 . . . *War Service: Commissioned Fleet Air Arm,* 1941 . . . *Pre-Ops Training, Rossater* 1941-2 . . . *Group Citation . . . Personal Citation . . . Demobilized June,* 1946 . . . *Joined Ransom Commercial Airways, February,* 1947 . . . *Ferry Pilot.*

"It's your story," said the doctor carefully. "*You* know what it is you want me to believe. The trouble began, I understand, on your last flight?"

"That's right. Or rather, that's when *my* troubles began. The thing's been going on for longer than that—much longer. Years, certainly; perhaps decades." Brady's fingers were like talons on the desk top. "Someone's got to *do* something, Doctor! Time is racing by, and with every passing day *They* grow stronger. I've got to make people understand—"

"Let's start at the beginning," suggested Gorham. "Suppose you tell me all about that unfortunate last flight."

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His calm matter-of-fact tone had a soothing effect on the younger man. Brady's voice lost its high note of hysteria.

"Yes, sir," he said. "Very good, sir. Well, then, it was this way. We touched down safely at Manila, and unloaded the cargo—medical supplies we carried chiefly, you know, sir, and machine tools—and leaving the Philippines we flew in a south easterly direction, for the Fijis. We were about half an hour out when I noticed something wrong. We kept losing height for no reason at all. At least there was a reason—one of the wing tanks was spraying oil all over the South Pacific.

"We radioed our position back to the Manila airfield and and lurched on, coaxing the last mile out of our damaged ship. And, but for a typhoon that hit us suddenly out of the blue, we'd probably have made a quiet landing somewhere.

"It was a shrieking hundred-mile-an-hour gale that picked us up, and it was all I could do to hold the plane's nose steady in the face of that blast.

"It grabbed us, and shook us, and lifted and dropped us, and spun us as if we weighed ounces instead of tons. We had no way of climbing above the storm, of course; we just had to sit there and take it.

"All three of us were nerve-tattered, bone-bruised, and dog-sick from the storm's beating, and not one but would have cheerfully given up a year's leaves to be clear of this mess. And then, suddenly—as suddenly as it had sprung from nowhere—the typhoon passed. One minute we were standing on our ears in a maelstrom of wind and rain; the next, the skies were crystal clear and a benevolent sun beamed down on a blue tranquil sea, while under the shadow of our wing tips lay the pink-and-green sanctuary of a tropical island!"

Gorham coughed politely, interrupting his patient.

"Pardon me, Lieutenant. I'd like to make a note of that. It may be important. An island? *What* island?"

Brady shrugged helplessly.

"I don't know, sir. We had been twisted, battered, bounced around so badly, and for so long, that none of us had any idea where we were. We might have been one mile or fifty—or five hundred!—from where the typhoon struck us."

His voice strengthened with purpose. "But wherever it is, we've got to find that island again. *Got* to! Because it's *Their* island. Unless we find it, and destroy *Them*—"

"Suppose," suggested the doctor quietly, "you go on with your story? You reached this uncharted island. And you landed safely, I take it?"

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"That's right, sir. We landed safely on a sandy strip of beach—"

We landed safely, continued Lieutenant Brady, on a sandy strip of beach. We were jubilant at having made a safe landing but uncertain as to just *how* safe the place was. We didn't know, you see, whether we'd been carried into friendly or enemy territory. In that godforsaken corner of the world there was also the possibility that the island's inhabitants, if any, might be technically neutral, but still dangerous. In other words, head-hunting aborigines.

Imagine our pleasure and surprise, then, when a few minutes after we'd landed we heard a cheerful hail and looked up to find white men approaching us from the wall of tropical foliage that spanned the beach.

They were smiling and unarmed, and they welcomed us in English with courteous enthusiasm. They had seen us land, said the head of their party—a youngish chap who introduced himself as Dr. Grove—and had hurried out to meet us in case anyone needed medical assistance.

I assured him we were all right, and that we needed only food, rest, and a means of communicating our whereabouts to the nearest airfield, which by this time was undoubtedly searching for us.

He nodded. "Food and rest you shall have," he said heartily. "As for the other—those things take time in this primitive country. But we shall see; we shall see."

"We have a radio in the 'plane—" I began, but Jack Kavanaugh, our radio-operator, shook his head at me.

"*Did* have, Skipper! It went out just as we sighted the island. Must have got whanged around a bit in the storm."

"But you can fix it?"

"I suppose so. If it's nothing serious. I'll tell you better after I've had a chance to look it over."

"Of course," nodded Grove. "But in the meantime, I hope you'll accept our humble hospitality? We don't have the pleasure of entertaining new guests here very often. It will be good to chat with you all. If you'll follow me—"

There was nothing else to do. Like sheep being led to the slaughter—blindly trusting and without a struggle—we followed him off the beach into a winding jungle path.

It was Tom Goeller, my navigator, who first intimated there might be something wrong about this set up. Even *he* did not really suspect anything; he was just puzzled. He wondered aloud as we pushed forward: "Where from? I don't get it!"

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"Don't get what?" I asked him. "What do you mean—where from? What's biting you, Tom?"

"That Grove character," grumbled Tom. "He said they saw us land. Only—where from? Where the hell do they live? In the trees? I had a good look at this island just before we landed. A good, long look—from topside. And I didn't see a sign of anything that looked like a house."

I said: "By God, you're right! I didn't, either. I wonder if—"

But my question was answered before I voiced it. We stopped, inexplicably, before a sort of concrete shelter under a sprawling banyan tree; a lean-to sort of business in mottled green and brown—so perfectly camouflaged to conform with its surroundings that you could hardly see it from ten yards away, much less from the air.

Dr. Grove smiled and said: "Here we are, gentlemen." He touched a button, and the shelter door swung open. "If you will be good enough to enter—"

Kavanaugh spoke up roughly. "Enter what? That?"

Grove laughed pleasantly. "Don't be alarmed. It's merely a lift. The entrance is from ground level."

"A lift!" I exclaimed. "In this jungle? What kind of monkey business is this, anyhow? Do you mean to tell me you live underground?"

"My dear Lieutenant," said the self-styled 'Doctor' languidly, "I'll be glad to explain everything—later. It's all very simple. But first I must insist that you—"

"Oh!" I interrupted. "So now you are *insisting*, eh? And suppose we prefer not to step into your mysterious little parlour? Then what?"

"Then," sighed Dr. Grove, "I should be compelled—most regretfully—to enforce my request."

"That right?" I grunted. "Well, guess again, pal. There are more of you than us—but we happen to be armed." I took out my automatic and held it on him level. "That's one detail you seem to have overlooked. Now—"

"I overlook no details, Lieutenant," answered Grove quietly. "Would you be kind enough to fire your gun? If you have qualms against killing a man in cold blood"—his lips curled mockingly—"you might fire into the air."

I stared at him, baffled. He wasn't stalling. You can *feel* things like that. He was amused, superior, contemptuous. Goeller said: "Watch yourself, Skipper; it's a trick! He *wants* you to shoot. The sound will bring help."

Grove smiled. "Wrong, my friend. I need no help." He

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slipped a hand into his breast pocket. "Very well. Since you won't accept my invitation—"

Shooting was risky, but I had no choice. "O.K.," I snapped. "You asked for it!" And I squeezed the trigger. I froze on it, waiting for the blast, and the sight of his body crumpling before me.

But nothing happened!

Gorham, listening to this recital, blinked. "You mean," he suggested, "the gun missed fire—that it jammed?"

"I mean," said Brady helplessly, "it just didn't go off; that's all. It didn't miss fire. It didn't jam. There wasn't a thing wrong with it, mechanically. Later I took it down piece by piece and examined it. It was perfect. But it just wouldn't fire on that island."

Gorham said slowly: "It wouldn't fire—on that island?" His eyes on the younger man were cautious, and he was doodling thoughtfully on the pad before him. "But that's incredible! Why not?"

"I soon found out," said Brady grimly, "about that. About that and a lot of other things—"

I stood there, he continued, speechless. I couldn't understand. At first I thought—like you—that my gun had jammed. Then suddenly I discovered that the rest of the crew had drawn their guns and that they, too, were staring incredulously at utterly futile weapons.

"You see?" shrugged Grove. "Now, perhaps, you will be kind enough to step into the shaft?"

"Not on your life!" I blazed back. "I don't understand what's going on here. But, whatever it is, I don't want any part of it. Come on, men! Let's get out of here!"

"I'm sorry," said the doctor. "You force me to use harsh measures. Believe me, I do so reluctantly."

From his breast pocket he drew a slender tube about the size and shape of a fountain pen. He pointed it at me—at *us*, I should say, because from it suddenly flowed a silver cone of radiance.

I started to rush him, shouting something or other. But both shout and movement stopped abruptly as that curious, silvery radiance engulfed me. It wasn't gas. It was odourless and tasteless; it did not burn or sting or cause pain in any way. But it was as though I had charged into an ocean of cobwebs, or become enmeshed in a shroud of moonbeams. I could neither move nor speak; only my senses functioned.

As in a dream, I heard Dr. Grove bid his followers: "Place them in the shaft. Gently, please!" Then the feel of hands

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lifting, carrying me; they felt—how can I explain it?—they felt *far away* upon my body, as though layers of sponge rubber lay between their flesh and mine.

I could see, too, but only straight ahead of me, in the direction in which my pupils were fixed. I couldn't move my eyes. So I saw only that the interior of the lift was of smooth, polished metal, anomalous in these surroundings. I heard the whine of an electric motor and sensed, rather than felt, the motion of our swift descent.

Dr. Grove leaned over me, thrusting himself into my line of vision. "I'm sorry, Lieutenant," he said. "I sincerely regret having had to inconvenience you. But, you see, firearms won't work on this island. No explosions of any kind are permitted—unless by special arrangement. We have means of hampering your primitive mechanical devices. That is why your guns did not fire, and why your radio will not operate."

I was filled with a thousand questions, but I could not ask them, not even with my eyes. "*What are these means?*" I wanted to ask him. "*And who, or what, are you that you should speak of a radio as a primitive mechanical device? Where are we going, and what are you planning to do with us?*" All these questions hammered at my brain, but my tongue was silent.

Then the sensation of movement stopped, I heard the lift door slide open, and our captors lifted us again. I saw the metal ceilings of long, well-lighted corridors, and heard voices proclaiming the presence of many more persons in these subterranean vaults, and once was silent witness to a conversation between Grove and someone apparently his superior.

"Well, Frater?"

"I'm sorry, Frater Dorden. It was necessary. They would not come willingly."

"I see." A sigh. "Few of them do. Ah, well—put them in sleeping chambers until they recover . . . And be gentle. They are frightened, poor devils."

And then our journey continued through a maze of clean-gleaming metal corridors, until finally I was carried through a doorway and placed gently on a cot. A light covering was thrown over me; its pleasant warmth made me realize how weary I was. I could not close my eyes, but the lights were dimmed slowly, and at last in utter darkness I forgot my troubles in sleep . . .

I do not know whether the return of lights awakened me, or whether some unseen control automatically brought back the illumination when I awoke. At any rate, I roused from my slumber to find the room bright again.

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Even more important was the fact that I could move. I leaped from my cot and sprang to the door at the other side of the room, but, as I had expected, it was locked. So I gave up, for the time being, any idea of attempting to escape and set myself to a study of my surroundings.

For one thing, I was alone. Apparently our captors had assigned each of us to a separate chamber, or cell. This one was Spartan in its simplicity. Four walls of a dull grey metallic substance I could not immediately identify—a floor of some resilient rubber or plastic composition—a low ceiling of the same material as the walls. A cot, a chair, and a desk were the only furnishings. There were no decorations on the walls; no carpet covered the floor; and, of course—since we were underground—there were no windows.

What amazed me most was that there were no lighting fixtures. I looked in vain for any source from which originated the pleasant, unflickering illumination that flooded the room. I found nothing. It was no jiggery-pokery of indirect lighting, either. The flow of light was constant and, oddly enough, there were no shadows!

I think that's when I started to get frightened. I don't mean gibbering, knock-kneed scared, but *cold*. Cold and awed and numb, like—well, the way a trapped rabbit must feel when it sees the hunter approaching.

These persons, these men who spoke with indifferent contempt of mankind's finest accomplishments, who regretfully and casually employed weapons and tools unknown to science—who were they? And why had we been separated? Where were my comrades—Kavanaugh and Goeller? Suddenly, desperately, I needed the reassurance of their presence.

I raised my voice and shouted. There was no reply. The impassive walls should have echoed the panic in my voice, being metal. But, like everything else in this strange place, it behaved unnaturally. It absorbed the sound as a sponge absorbs water.

I shouted again and again. Fruitlessly, I thought. But not fruitlessly. For suddenly I heard the faintest sound behind me and whirled. Dr. Grove was stepping through the wall.

Lieutenant Brady stopped abruptly, as if in anticipation of his listener's reaction. It came. Dr. Gorham stopped doodling and tossed a swift, anxious frown at the younger man.

With an obvious effort he erased the sudden pursing of his lips. He said quietly: "Through the *wall*, Lieutenant? Of course you mean through the *door?*"

"Through the wall," said Brady dully. "Through the wall, sir. The door was in front of me. But Dr. Grove stepped into my cell through the solid metal wall."

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"You realize," said Gorham, "that what you are saying is impossible?"

"To us"—Brady's eyes were haggard—"it is. To *Them*, nothing is impossible. Nothing! Or very little. That is why we must act, and act *now!* Before it is too late. You must believe me, sir! This is man's last chance—"

"I'll do my best," promised Gorham. "Perhaps you'd better continue? This Dr. Grove stepped through the wall—"

I'll cut it short, said Brady wanly. I'll tell it as quickly as I can. I'm just wasting your time and mine. I can tell by your eyes that you don't believe me. But someone must. Somewhere, somehow, sometime—someone must . . . Well, as I was saying, Dr. Grove stepped through the wall. And strange as it may sound, in that moment my panic ended. I still *feared;* yes. But I feared as a man fears a god, or a demon, or a raw and elemental force beyond his comprehension. I did not look on him with dread, as one who watches a human foe charge upon him with flaming gun or blood stained sword. I looked on him with awe, knowing him to be as far above and beyond me in the life scale as I am superior to a dog or a beast of burden.

So it was we talked—not as man to man, but as man to a lesser creature. And *I* was the lesser creature. He was the master, I the serf. And he told me many things . . .

Has it ever occurred to you, Doctor, that we humans are an egotistical race? Our Darwins and our Huxleys have told us we are the product of a steady, progressive evolution—an evolution that started in primæval slime and has gradually developed to our present proud and self-proclaimed status as *homo sapiens.*

Homo sapiens—intelligent man! . . . But perhaps we are not so intelligent, at that. For in our blind folly we have assumed ourselves to be the final and glorious product of Nature's eternal striving towards perfection!

Could we not guess that the same force which led the first lungfish from primordial ooze to solid earth—the force which evolved the Neanderthal man from his bestial, hairy ancestor, and developed from this rock-hurling cave man a race that works its destruction with atomic fission—could we not have guessed that this force would inevitably progress a step further?

That is what has happened. There dwells upon earth today a race representing the *next step* in man's progress. A people to whom our thoughts are as immature and elementary as to us is the prattling of infants.

They begin where we leave off. Our vaunted physics and mathematics are their nursery ABC's; the hard-won learning of

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our best brains is theirs intuitively. They *sense* what we must study; and what they must study, we cannot even begin to grasp. They are the new lords of creation.

How they came to be, that is one thing even they do not know. There is a force called "mutation" which you, as a doctor, must understand better than I. By mutation a white rose appears among red, and the white breed true from that time on. The new men are mutants. They—or the first of them—were born of normal parents. But from the cradle they sensed that they were different. Having a telepathic instinct, they were able to discern their brothers in a crowd—or even over long distances—and they banded together.

Long ago—how long Dr. Grove did not tell me—the new men decided they must isolate themselves from us. It was a logical decision. They had no more in common with us than we have with our pets. Few men, by choice, dine with dogs or sleep in stables.

So they sought this secluded island in the Pacific, far from lesser man's civilization. They went underground to escape detection. There they live, and study, and learn, and wait with infinite patience for the day when they must emerge and take over the world which is theirs by inheritance—even as *homo sapiens* took it from his forbear, the ape man.

"We are few in number," Grove told me, "but we increase with each passing year. Some are born here; others come from the four corners of the earth, drawn to us by mental *rapport*. Soon we will be enough, and strong enough, to accept the responsibility of government of all the earth."

"You mean," I said, "destroy man? And claim the entire world for yourselves?"

Grove said, almost sadly: "How little you understand us, you humans. Do you destroy the animals of the field just because they are not your intellectual peers? Our obligation is to keep and protect you; to act as your friendly guardians in a world that will be strange to you, and frightening."

"Yes, frightening," he went on as I began some protest. "I saw the dread and horror in your eyes when I walked into the room. You did not understand how I passed through a wall that to you seems solid. Not understanding, you feared.

"Yet there is nothing supernatural or fearful about what I did; about what any of us can do at will. There is no such thing as a solid in a universe wherein all things—size and dimension and substance are but relative. *We* know there is room and to spare for the molecules comprising our persons to pass unhindered through the molecules comprising these walls. We simply make a necessary mental adjustment—and walk where we will. It is an

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ability as fundamental to us as breathing is to a person like you."

"Then what," I asked him, "*is* your plan for man?"

"Your question should be," he replied gently, "what is Nature's plan for man? And I believe the question answers itself. The answer lies in history. What became of Nature's earlier experiments: the giant reptiles, the anthropoids, the men who dwelt in caves and trees?"

"They died out," I said. "Civilization passed them by. They fell before the onrush of higher life forms."

"Even so," Grove said regretfully. "Even so. But you have our pledge that we will be kind. We will be kind."

You see, that was the essence of the matter. These new men are intelligent, a thousandfold more intelligent than we. And being that great step farther along the path to perfection, they are born with the instinct to gentleness. That is why their weapons anæsthetize, but do not harm. They will not, they *cannot*, kill.

I could go on for hours relating what I heard and saw during the three weeks I was prisoner in the subterranean refuge of the new men. I'll tell only a few things, because I can see you—like all the others—think I am mad. But there are some things you should know.

Those metal cells hold more than two hundred humans like you and me, men and women who have stumbled by accident upon this hidden-away island and have been restrained there lest they go back and tell the world of the conquest to come.

They are comfortable, of course. They are well fed and housed, entertained and made as happy as possible—under the circumstances. Men do not ruthlessly destroy their pets. And on that island, men are the wards of supermen.

I could quote names that would amaze you. A famous author and traveller whose ship disappeared some years ago in the Pacific—a big-game hunter supposedly killed—an aviatrix for whom a dozen fleets sought in vain. They are there.

I could tell you something else that would make the small hairs creep on the back of your neck—if you dared let yourself believe it. *They* are here among us already, the new men. As their hour of ascendancy approaches, they are paving the way for their bloodless conquest. Some of them have left the island and taken their places in our world. You can see the master plan. A handful of them settled in key spots—here a politician, there an industrial magnate, there an author whose every word is gospel to his readers—what chance has a race of underlings to combat them when they strike?

And they *will* strike, and soon. When they do, that will be

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our end as the rulers of earth. For they cannot fail in anything they attempt. We, as a people, are strong. But *They* are omnipotent!

"That is why," concluded Brady, "you've got to make yourself believe me, no matter how crazy this sounds. You've *got* to, Doctor. From the broader point of view, perhaps it's better they should inherit the earth. But I am a human. And as a member of my race, I do not want to fall before a higher culture, no matter how superior.

"If we want to live, *They* must die. Their island must be destroyed, utterly and completely. An atomic bomb—"

"You have said," interrupted Dr. Gorham, "that they are omnipotent. You have called them wise with the wisdom of demigods. Yet you escaped from their island without outside help. Is that proof of their superhuman intelligence?"

Brady shook his head.

"It is proof of their great kindness, and my animal cunning. There is a chink in their armour. I took advantage of it. They cannot wilfully cause any creature pain. Knowing this, I begged Grove to take me to the surface so I could get some things from the 'plane one day. Some personal belongings, I told him. Pictures of my loved ones that I had hidden in a secret compartment.

"He agreed. We had been on friendly terms for some weeks, and he suspected no treachery. That is a human trait. They cannot conceive of guile or deceit.

"He was careless, and I was desperate. He turned to look when I cried out and pointed to something behind him; he never knew what hit him. I don't know whether my rock killed him or not. I hope not.

"The 'plane, of course, was useless. But there were self-inflating life rafts, and the water was only yards away. I paddled from that devil's shore with the strength of a madman. You know the rest: How my food and water ran out. How they found me raving deliriously days or maybe weeks later, bearded and sun-blistered and more than half dead."

Dr. Gorham nodded and quietly closed the memo book in which he had scratched only doodles. "Yes," he said quietly. "Yes. It must have been a terrible experience." He rose.

"Well, Lieutenant—" he said awkwardly.

Lieutenant Brady stared at him with hopeless eyes.

"*You* don't believe me, either," he said. "Do you?"

"It's been a pleasure listening to your story," the medico said. "I'll make a report to my superiors. Please be patient and try not to worry. Good day, Lieutenant."

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"Go to the devil!" said Lieutenant Brady dully; he added mechanically—"sir."

The doctor stiffened, then gazed compassionately at the younger man for an instant, shrugged, and left the narrow chamber.

Outside, another medical officer greeted him.

"Ah, there, Gorham! You've seen him? What's the verdict?"

Gorham touched his forehead. "A clear case of persecution mania—an amazing form. I've never heard a tale so complete and logical, but—" He shrugged. "Do what you can for him. I'm afraid he's going to be here for a long time—perhaps for as long as he lives. Turned loose, he might be dangerous."

The other medical officer shook his head.

"Tough! A nice boy, too. But it does nasty things to a man, floating for weeks in a life raft. He was the only one of his crew to survive. Well, Doctor—will you lunch with me?"

"No, thanks," said Gorham. "I've got to run along. Have to turn in a report and a recommendation on this case."

"Of course. See you later, then."

The other medico disappeared down the spotless corridor of the mental ward. Gorham pondered briefly, orienting himself. He was in the west wing of the hospital, facing the street. His car stood at the kerb just outside. He was very busy. There was so much work to be done; *so* much. And if he walked through the ante-room, some fool was sure to delay him, drag him into a long-winded discussion. He didn't feel like talking. He wanted to get out of this place and forward his report that the Brady case was closed. That there would be no more trouble from that source.

He glanced swiftly up and down the corridor. There was no one in sight. His senses told him the street was also deserted. There was no danger of his being seen.

So Dr. Gorham turned and walked quietly through the wall.

* * *

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Sir Malcolm Sargent tells a story of the marriage of the daughter of a Master of Trinity House. It was arranged that after the ceremony the happy couple should pass, on leaving the church, beneath an arch of oars held up by Thames boatmen. A woman with her child watched with interest amongst the onlookers. "O, mummy!" said the child, "look at them oars!" "Hush child," said the mother, "them's not *'ores!* Them's *bridesmaids!*"

Quoted by W. J. BROWN in *Jamaican Journey*

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ASSASSIN

"Only I didn't kill him," he said. "I have witnesses"

by GEORGE TABORI

THIS might be a story of murder. The only snag is that there is no murderer. It has everything else however—a silent Englishman, a fascinating Armenian, his obese wife, lovely daughter and caddish son, a taciturn nurse and a Rumanian fan dancer named Mimi. In fact, nothing is left out—neither hate nor heat, clues nor motives, nor the corpse with a gaping skull.

It happened in Basra, near the Persian Gulf, the hottest town on earth—a dirty, noisy, maddening place that looks strangely pretty from the air or in a photograph. Some call it the "Venice of the Orient," on account of its many canals.

One night I was sitting in the garden of the Hotel Euphrates, drinking arak with ice. My companion was an English army surgeon named Charles Cabe, whose patient I had been by chance and great good fortune some months before. Suddenly he turned to me.

"Are you interested in murder stories?" he asked.

"Not particularly."

"Why not? You're a writer, after all."

After four years in the East, I was sick and tired of these sudden and unpredictable revelations. I tried to explain.

"Considering the kind of world we live in, I'm mainly interested in why people do *not* murder one another," I said.

He was pleased. "Precisely," he said. "That's my story, too."

Resignedly, I ordered another round of drinks and began to listen.

You wouldn't have guessed, would you, that I once studied brain surgery? he asked, and when I did not reply, he went on: I was considered reasonably brilliant; I had pretty good hands then. When the war came, I joined up, came out to Cairo and then on here. We had the hospital up by the Blue Mosque. Our cases were mainly dysentery, typhus, boils and eczema. I hated every moment of it until Mimi arrived.

She was the finest combination of witch and angel that ever lived,

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mainly witch. Green eyed, red headed, milky skinned. She came from Tehran and danced at the Casino. Couldn't really dance, but she wore nothing but a glittering girdle and brassière, and the boys loved her. She was clever and amusing and really kind once you broke down the hard surface.

These night club girls are sentimental youngsters. All they want is to save a few hundred pounds and collect a few pieces of jewellery! Then go back to wherever they came from—Bucharest or Budapest or Vienna—and marry the boys they used to play with as children. The days were sheer hell at the hospital, but at night I would go back to the Casino and sit with her, drinking Cyprus wine or arak, and at dawn go home to her room. When she kissed you, you felt like a very small baby again, if you know what I mean.

She hated the sort of life she had to live, the whole "Grand Tour de l'Orient"—this glorified pilgrimage that starts in Belgrade and leads through garish night clubs in Sofia, Athens or Istanbul, down to Baghdad and Basra and Port Said. Mimi wanted one of two things—an Anglo-Saxon husband, preferably young, handsome and rich, or enough dollars and pounds to return to Rumania and buy herself a farm and raise chickens and children.

One night while three skinny girls were doing a phoney *zardas* and we were sitting in one of the boxes at the back of the club, she asked me if I would marry her. I thought of my years of training and the army and my mother in Dorset, and said no. She did not seem to mind. She got herself thoroughly drunk, though.

Then I met Gabardian. He was the richest man in town, a fat Armenian, half-blind, with a bulbous nose and a soft feminine voice. He owned most of Basra, the warehouses, the canal boats, two hotels, all the houses of ill repute and some of the buses, as well as a flourishing export-import business. He phoned me at the hotel and asked me if I would take him as a private patient.

At first I refused, but then he pulled some strings. So he came along and had all sorts of tests and told me about the symptoms—spells of dizziness and double vision, and the strange, rushing noises he would hear, as if an express train had suddenly roared by. In the second week the diagnosis was clear. He had a tumour the size of a goose egg on his brain.

"You need a tricky operation," I said. "You'd better go to Stockholm or London or right over to the States."

"There is a war on," he said, "in case you have forgotten. Anyway, I have confidence in you."

He asked me to dinner one night. He lived in a great white mansion, half Oriental and half European, with long, dark rooms behind a Moorish patio. The house seemed full of silent servants and birds. I have never seen so many birds at a time, not even at the zoo.

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There were parrots and canaries and heaven knows what else chirruping and twittering away in cages all over the place.

I met his family too. His wife was fat, sad and silent, uneasy in my company. The daughter had a glorious pair of eyes and a chalk white face ; the son was a nervy youth who tried to look and act like Clark Gable. Gabardian was a charming host, however. We had champagne to drink, pilaff to eat and five cigars to smoke. After dinner, Gabardian went out for a few moments. The rest of them sat nervously watching me.

" When will you operate ? " the daughter asked.

" In a month's time," I said.

" Why wait so long ? " the son cut in.

I explained that a great deal of preparatory work was needed to locate the exact whereabouts of the tumour. After a pause, the mother spoke up.

" What are his chances ? "

" Couldn't say," I answered. They looked at one another then, and I felt very uncomfortable.

The news of Gabardian's sickness spread quickly. It became the main topic of conversation in cafés, offices and bazaars. The papers mentioned it cautiously, and wherever I went—to the Euphrates Hotel or the Casino or the barber's shop, or even while travelling down one of the canals—I felt curious eyes upon me.

Then the strange suggestions began. First I took little notice, but soon was forced to realize that the operation and its eventual outcome were everybody's concern. It fell like a shadow over Basra, and it seemed that in my hands I held the fate of a town.

One morning Hassan, the barber, leaned over me.

" I hear you're going to operate on Mister Gabardian ? "

" Who told you ? "

" Everybody knows."

I said nothing.

" Mister Gabardian is a great man," he went on cautiously. " He owns everything, even this building." He waited. " He raised the rent last month ; we may be evicted."

I looked at him and he shut up.

A few days later, while I was sitting on the terrace of a café waiting for Mimi, a young Arab came over to me and pulled up a chair. " Excuse me, Captain," he began, " but I hear that you're going to operate on Gabardian."

" Who are you ? "

" Never mind," he said. " He broke our strike last May. He's going to break the next one. We don't like him."

" Get going," I replied, " or I'll have you thrown out."

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He stuck out his hands. His fingers were crushed stumps. " His men did it," he said quietly, and went.

Mimi knew about it, too. " I hear that you're going to do an important operation, *chéri*," she said one evening as we left the club.

" What's that to you ? " I asked irritably.

She shrugged. " Nothing," she said, but added, " What are his chances ? "

I shut her mouth with a kiss.

Next day a thin little man came up to me in the street as I was getting into my Jeep. " My name is MacGregor," he introduced himself. " When will it be ? " he asked.

" When will what be ? " I said, but I knew what he meant.

He winked and lowered his voice.

" The business circles of this community are very interested in the fate of that notorious monopolist. He's too powerful. There was a meeting last night. It would be appreciated if—"

I looked at him and he leered and walked off. But the same afternoon a Military Intelligence officer 'phoned me. I never liked him.

"About this operation, Cabe—" he began. " Do you feel up to it ? "

" I shall do my best. Why ? "

" Gabardian is a very important—even, shall we say, awkward—factor in the present situation."

" He's just another patient to me."

" He isn't for G.H.Q. in Cairo. His demise would clarify matters considerably."

" I don't know what you're talking about."

" I'm going to be blunt," he said. " Gabardian has been a great obstruction to our plans. Now with all that stuff going through to a certain power we won't mention, it'd be a definite help if Gabardian had a fatal operation."

I was angry. " Why don't you have him shot ? "

" Don't be a fool, Cabe," he said. " You're a soldier."

" I'm a doctor, too," I said, and left.

All the innuendoes of those few days seemed to lead to one powerful and beastly suggestion—kill Gabardian. I'm not trying to appear an impeccable character, the faithful servant of the medical profession and all that. But I couldn't help remembering Hippocrates and his ethics and my oath. And, somehow, I liked Gabardian. Perhaps it was the hidden Christian in me, and pity for the hunted.

However, the fun had only just started. The night after Gabardian moved into the hospital, his wife came into my office,

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sadly, in black. At once I knew there was something fishy about the visit. Staring at the electric fan, she began some story about their daughter. She had fallen in love with a handsome and elegant Greek, and now the father refused to give his blessing. Tamara—that was the girl's name—had attempted suicide twice already. "She's very unhappy," her mother said.

"How unfortunate," I said. "But why tell me all this?"

She looked at me sadly.

"I thought you were more intelligent, Captain," she said.

"I'm not. Good night, madam."

But next day, as I was going through the latest X-rays of poor old Gabardian's skull, the daughter came. She looked attractive in a deadly way. Her eyes shone like onyx and her face was whiter than ever.

"I just saw Papa," she said, crossing her legs. "He is very ill, isn't he?"

"Rather."

"Will he live?"

"I shall do my best. I know how beloved he is by his family."

She looked away.

"He makes Mother very unhappy. Very unhappy. There is a girl, a—"

"That's none of my business."

She started to cry. "He is a tyrant."

"I'm rather busy now, Miss Gabardian. If you don't mind—"

She looked up. "I can't offer you much," she said urgently. "Only myself." She came closer.

"Kindly leave my office," I said coldly.

Next day it was the son who came to see me. He was wearing a loud sports jacket and nibbling his fingernails. He had the pasty face of a drug addict. At least he was more straightforward. He hated his father, he explained. He was in debt and his father wouldn't help him. He ended by offering five thousand pounds. I hit him. He tried to pull a dagger and I hit him again.

And then the night before the operation, driving home from the Casino with Mimi, I realized how restless she was.

"What's the matter, Mimi?"

"My staying permit expires next week."

"They'll prolong it, I'm sure."

"I don't think they will," she said in a flat voice.

"Nonsense. If you want me to talk to the police—"

"I don't want them to renew the permit."

I pulled up by the curb.

"I'm going home to Rumania," she said.

I was listening to my heart.

"What about Port Said?" I tried to tease her, "and Suez.

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And Cairo. And Alex—"

"I'm going home. I'll have my farm at last."

There was a pause. "You mean you've got the money?" I asked.

"That's right."

"How?"

She turned away. "Someone gave me a thousand pounds."

"That's a lot of money, you know."

"It may have been worth it."

"What may have been worth it?" I asked irritatedly.

"Me," she said. "Me for a night."

Suddenly I knew how much I loved her. "Who was it?" I hoped she would never tell me.

"Gabardian," she said. "I'm sorry."

"When?" I asked.

"Remember the night?" she said. "The night you told me you couldn't marry me."

I remembered the half-blind face, the bulbous nose, the sagging chin. I remembered Mimi's milk white skin. I saw them together for a moment.

"Good night," I said harshly, and drove off without turning. I couldn't have looked at her, for fear of what I might see in her expression—and remember, later . . .

On the morning of the operation I walked into Gabardian's room. He was cheerful, patted my hand, joked about his last will.

"I may not see you again," he said with a laugh. "So let me give you a present." It was an old iron icon, studded with rubies.

"You'll see," I said. "We can't put you to sleep, you know. You'll be awake throughout the operation."

"How fascinating," he said. "But that wasn't what I meant."

"You're not worried, are you?" I asked tiredly.

"I'm the most hated man in town," he said, winking with his good eye. "I'll bet they'll all be praying for my death tonight. Every one. Do you hate me, too?"

I waited, then I said, "A sick man is like a newborn infant. He's without guilt."

"Thank you," he said, and pressed my hand. "I won't worry now."

We started preparing for the operation at eight in the morning. Nurse Brooks was assisting; she was a taciturn blonde from Liverpool, a little dry and flat, but very efficient—the kind of woman who never would let you down. Washing my hands, I stopped by the window and saw little groups of people hanging round the entrance to the hospital. The whole town was waiting.

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Everything went smoothly. My old professors would have been proud of me. By ten forty-five the tumour had been removed. I showed it to Gabardian and smiled at him. He smiled back in gratitude. By one-thirty that afternoon it was all over.

" A beautiful job," Nurse Brooks said, and I thought again what a splendid assistant she was. Very surely, she was a woman who never would let one down.

We went back to my office to have a snack and a drink. It was such a hot night that even the canals seemed to perspire in the moonlight. At two-thirty the nurse on duty called me. Gabardian had a sudden hæmorrhage. It was one of those things no one could foresee or help. He died before daybreak.

The newspapers printed solemn obituaries; but only a handful of people turned up at the funeral. The whole town wore a leer that sickened me. A few mornings later at the barber's shop, I was greeted with significant smiles. I stared back at them coolly, but there was sniggering behind my back. The same day, a group of longshoremen cheered as I passed by. Next morning, the man who called himself MacGregor came up to me in the lounge of the hotel and gratefully stretched out his hand. I ignored him. But could you ignore a whole town? They all thought that I killed Gabardian, and all were grateful.

Saturday night there was the usual regimental dinner. I was conspicuously seated opposite the general. There were significant glances from all over the room. People came up and patted my back. When coffee was served the general leaned forward.

" Cabe, I've got news for you. G.H.Q. approved your promotion. About time, too."

I was silent. There was cheering from the others.

" What's more," the general went on, " how would you like to go home? You've been—"

I couldn't stand it any longer. " So you all think I killed him—"

" What on earth are you talking about? "

" It was a hæmorrhage! " I shouted, banging on the table. " Do you understand—a *hæmorrhage!* "

" But, of course, my dear fellow, of course."

It was hopeless. They wouldn't consider the truth. I was the hero of the day. They would never believe that I was anything but a very clever assassin now. I turned and walked out of the room.

The same night, when I came back to the hotel, Tamara—Gabardian's daughter—was there waiting for me. She wore a low-cut evening dress and sat on my bed, her eyes burning in her white face.

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"What are you doing here?" I asked.

"I came to thank you."

"It was a hæmorrhage," I tried, but she smiled.

"Naturally." She got up and came closer. "I'm going to be married next week. Thanks to you."

"Get out," I said.

"I'm ready to keep our bargain," she murmured, and offered her lips.

I opened the door. "Get out," I said.

"Don't you find me attractive?" she asked.

"Get out."

"You're a strange man, Captain Cabe."

The brother came the next morning, trying to look solemn and businesslike. "I must thank you for all you've done. In my mother's name, too."

I was too tired to interrupt, so I just watched him while he produced an envelope.

"We weren't sure if Father had paid for the operation—"

"It was a hæmorrhage," I tried without conviction. "Now go, please."

"All right, all right." He looked worried when he saw me getting up. "Of course it was a hæmorrhage."

That night I went to the Casino. I hadn't been there for some days. The moment I entered, the orchestra struck up with *For He's a Jolly Good Fellow*. The head waiter, Alois, led me to the best table, and there was a bottle of champagne on the house. I sent it back.

Mimi came up after her act. "Can I sit with you?" she asked.

"I thought you were gone."

"I'm not going," she said.

"What about your dream farm?"

"I've changed my mind."

She moved nearer. "I'm asking you again," she said. "Will you marry me?"

"What made you change your mind?"

She waited, then spoke almost hesitantly. "When a fellow kills a man because of a girl," she whispered, "that's love."

I looked at her blankly.

"Isn't it?" she asked with sudden fear.

"It was a hæmorrhage," I said again.

"I never thought you could be so jealous," she said, and she tried to kiss me.

I left without a word.

What was there to do? I could have gone home to England—away from the grateful leers and significant smiles. But I didn't. I

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stayed on, and I'm going to stay until they know that it was a hæmorrhage. One day they will—one day they surely will. I don't know how and when, but they will—they must. I have two witnesses, you know. Unfortunately, one of them is dead—Gabardian, who knew that I did my job well; he knew I tried my best.

Cabe looked at me as he finished his story.

"Do *you* believe me?"

"I do."

"Thanks," he said, ready to go.

"Tell me," I stopped him, "who *is* the second witness?"

His face turned angry. "So you don't believe me after all."

"Of course I do. Only as a matter of interest . . ."

He walked away without a word. I did believe him; there was a terrible sincerity in his voice, and for the first time in my life I realized that it could be worse to be taken for a murderer than to be one.

I wondered who Cabe's other witness was, and I was surprised when I discovered it by accident the next day.

I was leaving Basra. Driving to the station, I saw Cabe again. He was walking in the sun with a woman.

"Who is the lady with Major Cabe?" I asked the dragoman.

"That's Mrs. Cabe," he answered.

I turned to see better. They walked arm in arm, the tall, tired Englishman and his wife, a taciturn blonde, a little flat and dry. She was, I realized, the kind of woman a good man turns to at a time when the world refuses to accept his goodness. She was a dependable woman. The kind of woman who never would let you down.

* * *

ANGLE

Abraham Lincoln, as a young lawyer, was pleading two cases the same day before the same judge. Both cases involved the same principle of law, but in one he appeared for the defendant, in the other he spoke for the plaintiff. In the morning he made an eloquent plea and won his case. In the afternoon he took the opposite side and was arguing with the same earnestness. The judge, with a half-smile, enquired the cause of his change in attitude.

"Your honour," said Lincoln, "I may have been wrong this morning, but I *know* I am right this afternoon!"

N. REVELL, *Right Off the Chest*

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CATS' CRADLE

When the cat winketh,
Little wots the mouse what the cat thinketh

Proverb

Lat take a cat, and fostre hym wel with milk,
And tendre flessh, and make his couche of silk,
And let hym seen a mous go by the wal,
Anon he weyveth milk, and flesshe, and al,
And every deyntee that is in that hous,
Swich appityt he hath to ete a mous.

GEOFFREY CHAUCER, 1340-1400

Beyond Measure

Cats are of divers colours, but for the most part gryseld, like to congealed yse, which cometh from the condition of her meate; her head is like unto the head of a Lyon, except in her sharpe eares: her eies glister above measure especially when a man cometh to see a Cat on the sudden, and in the night. The Egyptians have observed in the eyes of a Cat, the encrease of the Moonlight for with the Moone, they shine more fully at the ful, and more dimly in the change and wain, and the male Cat doth also vary his eyes with the sunne.

EDWARD TOPSELL, *Historie of Four-footed Beastes*, 1607

Three a Shilling

In the old Welsh laws, a kitten from its birth till it could see was valued at a penny; when it began to mouse at twopence; and after it had killed mice at fourpence.

WILLIAM HONE, 1780-1842, *Every-Day Book*

Good Fortune

The next morning the artist found the cat curled up in a ball in his chair. "Ah, the best place, I see!" said he. Good Fortune immediately rose, and moving away, began to wash herself with the greatest thoroughness and dexterity. She happened to be present when the old woman brought in a bowl of fish, but Good Fortune made a point of keeping her eyes in the other direction.

"One would say," said the artist, "that she understood it is

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not polite to stare at people while they eat. She has been very properly brought up. From whom did you buy her?"

"I bought her from a fisherman in the market," said the old woman. "She is the eldest daughter of his chief cat. You know a junk never puts out to sea without a cat to frighten away water devils."

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH, *The Cat Who Went to Heaven*

Wanton

But, stopp'd the while thy wanton play,
Applauses too thy pains repay:
For then, beneath some urchin's hand
With modest pride thou tak'st thy stand,
While many a stroke of kindness glides
Along thy back and tabby sides.
Dilated swells thy glossy fur,
And loudly croons thy busy purr,
As, timing well the equal sound,
Thy clutching feet bepat the ground,
And all their harmless claws disclose
Like prickles of an early rose.

JOANNA BAILLIE, 1762-1851

Head Over Heels

I have a Kitten, my dear, the drollest of all creatures that ever wore a cat's skin. Her gambols are not to be described, and would be incredible if they could. She tumbles head over heels several times together, she lays her cheek to the ground and presents her rump at you with an air of most supreme disdain, from this posture she rises to dance on her hind feet, and she closes those various exhibitions with a loud smack of her lips. For point of size she is likely to be a kitten always, being extremely small for her age, but time I suppose, that spoils everything, will make her also a cat. She is dressed in a tortoise shell suit, and I know that you will like her.

WILLIAM COWPER, 1731-1800

Safety Catch

The Duchess of Richmond left annuities to certain female friends, with the burden of maintaining some of her cats: a delicate way of providing for poor, and probably proud, gentlewomen.

EDWARD WALFORD, *Old and New London*

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Boon Companion

The boon companion of the colossal elephant was a common cat! This cat had a fashion of climbing up the elephant's hind legs, and roosting on his back. She would sleep up there in the sun half the afternoon. It used to annoy the elephant at first, and he would reach up and take her down, but she would go aft and climb up again. She persisted until she finally conquered the elephant's prejudices, and now they are inseparable friends. The cat plays about her comrade's forefeet or his trunk often, until dogs approach, and then she goes aloft out of danger.

MARK TWAIN, 1835-1910

In Remembrance

Of all the cats whom I count my friends, only James has passed away too soon to know the blessedness of peace. Not that the life of James was a troubled life. If there were any war in it, it was of his own seeking, for James was that sort of cat to whom adventure calls.

Pretty it was to see the sleek Pippa welcome James back from his battles, mewing about him, asking how he came by his scratches.

A slovenly cat was James, as ever I saw. Pippa, who will wash herself from ears to tail after eating the tail of a sardine, could never understand the fine carelessness of the male. I have seen her, in distress over his slovenliness, turn to and wash James and sleek out his fur. James bore her with humour; at such times his eye was like the eye of a man who is having his white tie properly tied for him. Now he is dead, and I remember James with sorrow. His widow goes rich in black, and seems consoled.

OSWALD BARRON, 1868-1939, *Day In and Day Out*

Paragon

For I will consider my Cat Jeoffrey
For he is the servant of the living God, duly and daily serving Him.
For having considered God and himself he will consider his neighbour.
For if he meets another cat he will kiss her in kindness.
For when he takes his prey he plays with it to give it chance.
For one mouse in seven escapes by his dallying.
For he keeps the Lord's watch in the night against the adversary.
For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking about the life.
For he purrs in thankfulness, when God tells him he's a good Cat.

CHRISTOPHER SMART, 1722-1771

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★*In the fabled world of "The Thousand and One Nights" anything can happen, and anything may be believed. And these tales from the Arab tribes lose nothing in the retelling, except the original Arabic, when related by that collector of folk tales, C. G. Campbell. Lust, beauty, laughter, and the most callous and amusing reversals of fortune, are the constant elements in these lively tales, told with an engaging and earthy vigour that never fails to enchant.*

STORY OF THE TWO DANCERS

by C. G. CAMPBELL

ONCE in Basra there was a dancing boy and a dancing girl and they were brother and sister. They were Circassians of great beauty, and they were slaves of a Turk who kept a dancing hall. So beautiful was their dancing that the great and noble Pashas and even the Wali of Basra himself would pay bags of gold to watch their dancing. But the boy, whose name was Nasirulla, and the girl, whose name was Salma, were displeased at their situation, for whatever gold they earned, the Turk took it, and it appeared to them that they would remain forever slaves.

One day the boy Nasirulla said to his sister: "Know you that a time will come when our beauty will fade, and then these mighty Pashas will no longer want to gaze at our dancing. Then will our Turkish master sell us to do manual work on the roads and fields, and they will work us so hard that we shall die in a few years in agony and misery. But as for our master, he will be rich from all this gold which he takes from us, and he will buy a house and live in it with his mistresses while we are starving, and this state of affairs is neither right nor is it just."

The girl Salma replied: "Indeed, you speak the truth, but how are we to escape from this Turk? For in the daytime he is watchful, and at night does he not chain us by the neck with an iron chain?"

And Nasirulla replied: "We must kill this man." Salma turned pale and she said: "Do you not know the penalties for slaves who kill their masters? And how will this benefit us, since they will find him dead and then they will commence to flog us? Anyway, how can you kill him, since you are only a weak boy?"

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Then Nasirulla said to her: "Know you that I shall kill him, and when he is dead who will know of it? For the boys who serve the wines do not sleep in this house, and to them we can say, 'Our master is sick,' and they will suspect nothing. And as for the visitors who come for entertainment, they never see our master. For do not we have to go to them and sit on their knees and kiss them and coax them until they give us gold. And indeed they little know that our master takes the gold off us when we get behind the screen." Salma agreed with the words of her brother and she said: "Verily we should risk all and slay him."

The next day, when the dancing hall was closed for the night, Nasirulla took a mouse he had caught and he threw it in the great jar of wine, which had a neck as large as a wheel, and the mouse swam around in the wine, nor did it want to drown.

Then Nasirulla called out to his master: "Come and help me, for there is a mouse in the wine." And the Turk grew angry, for he thought: This is some trick of the boy to dip a bowl in the wine and steal some of it.

So the Turk came over and he peered into the jar of wine. And as he was looking for the mouse in the jar, Nasirulla caught him a blow on the back of the head with an iron bar, and he fell forward stunned, with his head in the jar.

Then Nasirulla called his sister and together they lifted the legs of the Turk and they thrust him completely into the jar of wine. And upside down in the jar of wine the Turk met the Angel of Death. And Nasirulla and Salma took what gold they could find in the house and put it in their pockets. Yet it was not sufficient for them, for they did not know where the Turk kept his main hoard of gold.

The next night the boys who served the wine came to the dancing hall, and Nasirulla said to them: "Know you that our master is sick, but you are to take the wine from the tap at the bottom of the jar as is your custom, and you will bring the money to me, for I am acting for our master, until, please God it may be soon, he is recovered and in health."

The boys drew the wine from the tap at the bottom of the jar, and they took it and gave it to the guests who were coming into the dancing hall. Then Nasirulla and Salma went out and they danced in a manner in which they had never danced before. And the Pashas and the Beys were amazed, for never had they seen such dancing, and they said one to the other: "Never has the entertainment been so good as it is tonight, and even the wine tastes better and has more body in it."

And after their dance was finished Nasirulla and Salma went out and they sat on the knees of the Pashas and on the knees of the Beys and they kissed them and tickled their ears until they pulled out

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their bags of gold and they gave them money such as they had never given before.

And that night when they closed the dancing hall Nasirulla and his sister counted their money and they said: "If we can keep this up for one more week, then we shall have enough money to return to the Caucasus."

The next night the hall was even more crowded than it had been on the first night, for the Pashas and the Beys had told their friends of the excellence of the dancing and the quality of the wine. And again Nasirulla and Salma danced in the most exquisite manner and again they kissed and tickled the ears of the Ottomans and they received even more gold than before.

And the noble Pashas and Beys said to each other: "The wine at this hall gets better every night, and as for the dancing, there is none like it in the world."

And again on the third night and on the fourth night the dancing was perfect and the wine was getting richer and richer and Nasirulla and Salma collected much gold.

But on the fifth night so many Turkish officers came to the hall that they could not all enter, and they quarrelled one with the other and fought to get in and a noble Bey was killed. And the Wali of Basra was informed of the affair.

On the morning of the sixth day soldiers came to the cabaret and they asked Nasirulla: "Where is Jamal Effendi, the owner of this hall?" Nasirulla's heart was full of fear and he replied: "Verily he has gone out to the market, nor do I know when he will return."

Then the Shawish in charge of the soldiers said: "We have been commanded by the Wali to confiscate the wine of this hall, because it is said to be of such quality that the officers of the garrison are fighting with each other to get at it. And we have also been ordered to take the dancing boy and the dancing girl who perform here, for they have been inflaming the passions of the garrison. But in future they will only perform before the Wali himself."

Nasirulla's face went as pale as death, and he thought: Now our secret is no longer a secret. But he said to the Shawish: "Know you that this wine is the finest wine in the world, but it will spoil unless you have a large number of men to move the jar. The jar must be kept vertical and not shaken, for it is most delicate wine, and you must keep the mouth of the jar tightly sealed, lest the cold air strike the wine and spoil it."

Then the Shawish went off to fetch porters to take the jar of wine, and Nasirulla said to his sister: "Come, for we cannot delay further." Then Nasirulla and Salma left the hall and they went out into the street, and they took with them their gold.

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When Nasirulla and Salma came out into the street the time was day, and they thought: Wherever we go now we will be seen by the people. It is better that we hide until nightfall. So they slipped into a large warehouse which was full of chests of enormous size. And Nasirulla opened one of the larger chests and he found it full of silk, so he emptied out the silk and hid it behind another chest. Then he and Salma got into the chest and he closed the lid, and with his knife he made a small hole that they might breathe air within that chest.

And when they had been some time hidden in the chest, Nasirulla and Salma heard footsteps approaching, and men walked into the vault. And one man said to the other: "Have you packed the silks?" The other man replied: "Master, I have packed them with my own hand in this chest." And he tapped with his hand on the chest in which Nasirulla and Salma were hiding. Then the master of the vault ordered: "Rope the chest, and I will return in one hour with the camels." But the servant said: "Master, I must fetch the porters to lift this chest before the rope can be passed around it, for alone I cannot lift it. And both the master and the servant left the store."

Salma was trembling with fear, and she said to Nasirulla: "Let us escape before they return." But Nasirulla replied: "Do not fear, for wherever this chest is going, we will go inside it. For it must be going a long way or they would not rope it, and any place is better for us than Basra. When the Wali finds the body of our master in his wine his brain will boil over even as the milk boils when it is left too long on the fire. But wait you here, and in two minutes I will return with bread and water for this may be a long journey."

And Nasirulla opened the box and he ran out into the street and he ran to a shop and he said: "Give me bread and dates and cheese and take this gold."

And Nasirulla bought a large bag and filled it with bread and dates and cheese, and he bought the largest bottle he could see and he filled it with water and he ran back to his sister, and on the way back he bought two water melons also.

And Nasirulla got into the chest and he closed the lid, saying to his sister: "Know you that these supplies may have to last us even for weeks, for perchance they are loading this chest on to a ship and sending it to India."

After a time the servant returned with porters, and they lifted the chest and roped it securely. Then they brought a camel and loaded the chest and they set out. And Nasirulla and Salma heard the bells of many more camels and they said: "This is no ship. Rather it is a caravan on the road to Baghdad."

And for days and days the caravan marched, and at night it halted, and each day Nasirulla and Salma took only a sip of water,

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and a slice of water melon and a few dates.

And when the days had joined to become a week the water melons were finished, and when the weeks had joined to become a month, the water was finished, and only a few dates and a little cheese remained. And Nasirulla said to his sister: "Know you that we were not on the road to Baghdad? Perchance we are on the road to Mecca through Busaiyir, or on the road to Syria by way of the desert." And Salma said: "If we do not arrive within three days then I must call out to the camel men that they release us, if only to kill us, for I am dying of thirst."

But the next day they heard around them the sounds of a large city and Nasirulla listened to the swearing and shouting of the people of the streets and he said: "The tongue is Turkish. How have we arrived in Turkey without passing through a great city? This must be a special caravan carrying goods for the Sultan himself, that it has been able to halt away from the cities, and supplies of water and food have been sent out to be ready for it in the desert that it be not delayed."

The camels came to a halt and porters came and the great chest in which were Nasirulla and Salma was unloaded and carried by the porters for a long way, and finally it was set down on a stone floor. And Nasirulla and Salma knew not where they were. They heard a man come, and he cut the rope around the box, and he said in Turkish: "I will go to summon the ladies that they may see the silks." And his voice was the voice of a eunuch. When the footsteps of the eunuch died away, Nasirulla opened the box and peered out, but there was nobody in sight.

So he and his sister staggered out of the chest, for they could scarcely walk from weakness, and they found themselves in a great hall, the walls of which were covered with marble and rare stones and with mirrors set in silver, and in the centre of the hall a fountain was playing. Nasirulla and Salma went to the fountain and they drank until their stomachs were filled.

Then Nasirulla took his sister and said: "Let us hide until we can find out what this place is, and how we can get out of it, for I do not suppose that it is closely guarded." And Nasirulla and Salma entered a small chamber which led off the main hall, and they found it crowded with the most beautiful dresses, made of rare cloths, and they were all for women, and there was not a single coat or cloak for a man in that room. Amongst the gowns and the dresses Nasirulla and Salma hid.

Then the eunuch returned to the large hall, and Nasirulla was amazed for behind the eunuch followed hundreds and hundreds of the most beautiful girls, and the eunuch went up to the great chest and threw it open, and he cried: "Ladies, see the latest chest of

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silks and fine cloths." But in the chest was only the skin of two water melons, hundreds of date stones, an empty bottle and a heavy smell, for verily Nasirulla and his sister had not left that box for over a month.

And the ladies and the eunuch looked into the box and they were amazed at what they saw. And the eunuch said: "I will go to order the guards of the Palace to seize the camel men that they may feel the bastinado until they die, for verily they have stolen the cloth which our Lord the Sultan had ordered for the ladies of his Imperial Harem."

Nasirulla heard the words of the eunuch and his heart stopped through very fear, and he said to his sister: "Do you know where we are? We are in the Harem of the Sultan himself, the most closely guarded place in the whole empire of the Ottomans, of which it is said that no man can enter it and no man can depart from it alive, and in this place there are only girls and eunuchs."

Nasirulla turned to the dresses in which they were hiding, and he took a dress which fitted him and he put it on, and his own clothes he hid. Salma also selected a new dress and put it on, for her dress was dirty, and after they had put on the dresses Nasirulla and Salma looked like sisters, nor could anyone who saw him tell that Nasirulla was a boy, for he wore his hair long after the fashion of the dancing boys, and his moustache was not grown.

Then they heard the eunuchs call out: "Ladies, come to your food." Nasirulla turned to his sister and he said: "Let us go and eat, for we are hungry." And Salma replied: "What, shall we go amongst them?" Nasirulla said: "We will go and eat. There are many hundreds of girls here and two new faces will never be noticed amongst them."

So Nasirulla and Salma went out into the hall, and they went into another hall, which was even larger than the first, and in it was laid out a great feast. And they saw before them a hundred roast sheep, and a hundred roast peacocks, and many hundreds of chickens and ducks and pigeon and doves and partridge and quail, and from every direction hundreds of the most beautiful girls in the world were coming and sitting down to the meal, and wine was brought for them by Negro slave girls.

Nasirulla and Salma sat down and ate of the feast until their stomachs were bursting, nor did anyone question who they were. And when all hands were withdrawn from eating, the Chief of the Eunuchs came round and he talked to some of the girls, and he came to Nasirulla and Salma and he said to them: "Your faces are new. Were you part of the last present to our Lord?" And Salma replied: "Verily we are new here, and our desire is to be of service to our Lord and Master."

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But the Eunuch sighed and he said : " How can this be ? It was different in the days when our master was a young man, though even then he rarely needed more than three hundred girls a year. But now he is old and his beard is white and his eyes are dim and even one girl would be too much for him. Yet we have three thousand in this place, and every month another hundred arrive as presents from the great rulers and governors, and these poor girls are condemned to live unloved and unseen in this vast harem."

And Nasirulla was amazed at the words of the eunuch, and he thought : While I am here and until I find a way out of this closely guarded place I will at least comfort some of these poor girls.

On the next and on the following days Nasirulla examined all the doors and windows of the harem, but they were all guarded by eunuchs armed with swords, nor could anyone pass in or out. And the days lengthened into months, but Nasirulla could find no place unguarded save one, and this was a window which was covered by a grid of iron bars as thick as a man's wrist, and beneath the window was a lake, nor could anyone leave the window without swimming through the lake.

And Nasirulla began to cut away at the bars, using diamonds and precious stones for the work, of which there was an abundance in the harem.

But the cutting of each bar in such a manner that it could not be detected took weeks, and it was long before the work was nearing completion.

One day, just before Nasirulla had finished the cutting of the bars, Salma came to Nasirulla and her face was as pale as death, and she said to him : " There is a rumour among the girls, and I believe this rumour to be true, that some eighty of them are with child, and it is known that these cannot be the children of our Lord the Sultan. And after a short time these children will become known and they will become apparent even to the Chief Eunuch himself, and when that happens there will be such investigations and such floggings and tortures and executions that the fountain in this harem will spray only blood."

And when Nasirulla heard the words of his sister he turned faint with fear, and he thought : Can such great consequences come from such little cause ?

Then Nasirulla took his sister and they went to the window and they finished the cutting of the remaining bar. And in the lake beneath the window Nasirulla saw two naked boys, who were in the sixteenth year of their life, and they were swimming and amusing themselves in the water.

Nasirulla said to his sister : " We must get these boys out of the

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way and we must steal their clothes, for if we dive now into the water they may raise the alarm, and if we land from the lake in wet clothes, then we shall attract attention. And verily we cannot walk through the city in the silken dresses of the harem."

Salma realized the truth of her brother's words, and she saw the clothes of the boys, which were lying safe and dry on the far bank of the lake. So Salma called out to the boys, and they saw the faces of two beautiful girls at the window for they knew not that Nasirulla was a boy, and they swam over to beneath the window, and Salma said to them: "We are two and you are two, come up here and play."

And the boys replied: "How can we do this when that window is covered by bars as thick as a man's arm? And is not that the Imperial Harem, the penalty for entering which is death by torture?" Salma said: "Do not fear. Just swarm up the wall and we will loosen the bars, nor will anyone see you, for the eunuchs never come to this window, as it is considered secure. And when you are inside we will hide you in a small chamber where none can see you, then let us amuse ourselves for an hour, and then you can return to the lake and to your clothes."

And the boys thought: Verily, there is no danger, and what a jest it will be to go into the Sultan's Harem itself.

So they clambered out of the water and up the wall, and they were in a naked condition. Nasirulla and Salma loosened the bars and let the boys in and led them to a small chamber which had only one door and no windows, and they said: "Here we can amuse ourselves unseen."

And Nasirulla and Salma said to the boys: "Wait here while we look round the corners and see that the eunuchs are sleeping peacefully."

But when Nasirulla and Salma were outside the door, they shut it and drove home a great bolt which secured that door from the outside, and the two boys were left prisoners in that room.

Then Nasirulla and Salma stripped off their clothes and they dived into the water and swam over the lake to the clothes of the boys, and Nasirulla had tied around his waist a rope to which was tied much gold and rare jewels.

And Nasirulla and Salma reached the clothes of the boys and they put them on and they became as two boys, for their long hair they wrapped in the turbans of the boys.

And as for the boys they sat in the small chamber and they said: "How sportive are these girls, for they have locked the door on us. This is indeed a fine joke." But the minutes passed and passed and the boys became cold for they were wet and naked, and they began

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to fear, for they thought: This place is the Sultan's Harem, and it is no place to be caught in through some foolish girlish trick. But the girls did not return and the boys sat naked and shivering with fear and an hour passed.

And out in the main courtyard of the harem the Chief Eunuch sat with his assistants who were not guarding the doors and he was watching some of the girls washing at a fountain. And he said to his comrades: "Are not some of the figures of the girls changing, or do my eyes play me tricks?"

And the eunuchs answered: "Verily your thoughts are our thoughts, and we have also seen many girls lately who are red-eyed from weeping. There is truly some matter here which requires investigation."

Then the Chief Eunuch sent for a wise woman and she came and examined the girls, and she said to the Eunuch: "Verily these girls are blessed with children." The Chief Eunuch was horrified at the words of the wise woman, and he thought: "Who can be the father of these children? It cannot be the Sultan our master, nor can it be from us the eunuchs, and apart from us there are only girls here, nor can a man enter this place."

So he ordered two of the eunuchs to take one of the girls and they tied her up by her thumbs to the beam of the ceiling, and the Chief Eunuch said: "There shall you remain until your thumbs pull out from your hands or until you tell us the truth of this matter."

And the girl stayed for twenty minutes until she screamed out in agony, and she said: "Know you that by magic, in the night, one of the girls in this harem becomes a boy, and she is one of the two Circassian sisters who are so much alike, and though in the daytime she is as a girl, yet at night she is a boy, and there is no doubt about this whatever."

The Chief Eunuch ordered the eunuchs: "Go and fetch me the two Circassian sisters who are so alike." And they went off and they searched, but they returned and said: "We cannot find them." The Chief Eunuch ordered them to go again and to search every room and every chamber in the great building of the harem. And they went and they searched and searched and they came to the chamber in which were the two naked boys, and they opened the door of that chamber and they found them within it, and they took them and chained them and brought them in front of the Chief Eunuch.

And the two boys wept and implored mercy from the Chief Eunuch, but he showed them no mercy. He commanded that they be tied by their thumbs to the beam of the ceiling, and that thing was done to them. He then ordered the eunuchs to flog them with whips until their lives were ended, for he thought: How can I show

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mercy when my own life is now in the most terrible danger ?

And when the two boys were dead, the wise woman came to the Chief Eunuch and said : " Verily eighty of the girls in this harem are with child."

The heart of the Chief Eunuch stopped beating from very horror, and he thought : Now my royal master will end my life. And he thought and thought and a way appeared open to him, and he said to himself : " I will announce this to the Sultan in open court, then through very shame he cannot confess that he is not able to have fathered these children."

So the next morning the Chief Eunuch went to the Royal Diwan, and there in the presence of the great ministers and generals and the distinguished people of the country he announced in a high voice : " Majesty, eighty of the ladies of your harem are blessed with children." And those sitting in the court were amazed, for the beard of the Sultan was white and his eyes were dim and he dribbled down his beard.

And the Sultan said nothing to the Chief Eunuch. However, when the court was over the Sultan retired to a private chamber and he sent for his secretary, whom he trusted, and he said : " Kill the Chief of my Eunuchs and take his body and bury it and let it be known in the court that he has died of sickness." And the secretary obeyed the orders of his master the Sultan.

And as for Nasirulla and Salma, when they had put on the clothes of the boys, they went into the city, and Nasirulla purchased weapons and two horses of the finest stock and six baggage ponies and they loaded them with supplies and they set out that very night for their own country, nor did they desire to linger in the lands of the Turks, and after many weeks of travel they arrived in safety.

And Nasirulla married a wife and he gave his sister Salma in marriage, and when in the winter evenings he used to go to the wine-shop and drink with his friends, he would say to them : " Know you that I have eighty children." But they did not believe his words.

* * *

PRIMROSE PATH

In Jan. she vowed to mend her ways,
In Feb. her stitch was nimble.
In March she laid her needle by,
In April lost her thimble.

And in the lovely month of May
She threw her mending things away . . .

JOYCE GRENFELL

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★*The young Acting Lieutenant Hornblower, returned to the fleet with his prize after his harassing command of the transport brig "Caroline," finds new and urgent orders awaiting him.*

But between Gibraltar and Plymouth lie greater hazards than even the intrepid Hornblower has known before, and fortune is not entirely with him on this occasion.

HORNBLOWER, THE DUCHESS AND THE DEVIL

by C. S. FORESTER

ACTING LIEUTENANT HORNBLOWER was bringing the sloop *Le Reve*, prize of H.M.S. *Indefatigable*, to anchor in Gibraltar Bay. He was nervous; if anyone had asked him if he thought that all the telescopes in the Mediterranean Fleet were trained upon him he would have laughed at the fantastic suggestion, but he felt as if they were. Nobody ever gauged more cautiously the strength of the gentle following breeze, or estimated more anxiously the distances between the big anchored ships of the line, or calculated more carefully the space *Le Reve* would need to swing at her anchor. Jackson, his petty officer, was standing forward awaiting the order to take in the jib, and he acted quickly at Hornblower's hail.

"Helm a'lee," said Hornblower next, and *Le Reve* rounded to into the wind. "Brail up!"

Le Reve crept forward, her momentum diminishing as the wind took her way off her.

"Let go!"

The cable growled a protest as the anchor took it out through the hawse-hole—that welcome splash of the anchor, telling of the journey's end. Hornblower watched carefully while *Le Reve* took up on her cable and then relaxed a little. He had brought the prize safely in. The Commodore—Captain Sir Edward Pellew of H.M.S. *Indefatigable*—had clearly not yet returned, so that it was Hornblower's duty to report to the Port Admiral.

"Get the boat hoisted out," he ordered, and then, remembering his humanitarian duty, "And you can let the prisoners up on deck."

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They had been battened down below for the last forty eight hours, because the fear of a recapture was the nightmare of every prizemaster. But here in the Bay with the Mediterranean Fleet all round, that danger was at an end.

Two hands at the oars of the gig sent her skimming over the water, and in ten minutes Hornblower was reporting his arrival to the Admiral.

"You say she shows a fair turn of speed?" said the latter, looking over at the prize.

"Yes, sir. And she's handy enough," said Hornblower.

"I'll purchase her into the service. Never enough despatch vessels," mused the Admiral.

Even with that hint it was a pleasant surprise to Hornblower when he received heavily sealed official orders, and opening them, read that "*you are hereby requested and required—*" to take H.M. sloop *Le Reve* under his command, and to proceed "*with the utmost expedition*" to Plymouth as soon as the despatches destined for Britain should be put in his charge. It was an independent command; it was a chance of seeing Britain again—it was three years since Hornblower had last set foot on the British shore—and it was a high professional compliment. But there was another letter, delivered at the same moment, which Hornblower read with less elation.

"*Their Excellencies, Major General Sir Hew and Lady Dalrymple, request the pleasure of Acting Lieutenant Horatio Hornblower's company at dinner today, at three o'clock, at Government House.*"

It might be a pleasure to dine with the Governor of Gibraltar and his lady, but it was only a mixed pleasure at best for an Acting Lieutenant with a single sea chest, faced with the need to dress himself suitably for such a function. Yet it was hardly possible for a young man to walk up to Government House from the landing slip without a thrill of excitement, especially as his friend Mr. Midshipman Bracegirdle, who came from a wealthy family and had a handsome allowance, had lent him a pair of the finest white stockings of China silk—Bracegirdle's calves were plump, and Hornblower's were skinny, but that difficulty had been artistically circumvented. Two small pads of oakum, some strips of sticking plaster from the surgeon's stores, and Hornblower now had a couple of legs of which no one need be ashamed. He could put his left leg forward to make his bow without any fear of wrinkles in his stockings, and sublimely conscious, as Bracegirdle said, of a leg of which any gentleman would be proud.

At Government House the usual polished and languid aide-de-

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camp took charge of Hornblower and led him forward. He made his bow to Sir Hew and Lady Dalrymple.

"Mr. Hornblower," said the latter, "I must present you—Your Grace, this is Mr. Hornblower, the new captain of *Le Reve*. Her Grace the Duchess of Wharfedale."

A Duchess, no less! bold blue eyes, and a once beautiful middle aged face. Hornblower poked forward his padded leg, pointed his toe, laid his hand on his heart and bowed with all the depth the tightness of his breeches allowed—he had still been growing when he bought them on joining the *Indefatigable*.

"So this 'ere's the feller in question?" said the Duchess. "Matilda, my dear, are you going to hentrust me to a hinfant in harms?"

The startling vulgarity of the accent took Hornblower's breath away. He had been ready for almost anything except that a superbly dressed Duchess should speak in the accent of Seven Dials. He raised his eyes to stare, while forgetting to straighten himself up, standing with his chin poked forward and his hand still on his heart.

"You look like a gander on a green," said the Duchess. "I hexpects you to 'iss hany moment."

She stuck her own chin out and swung from side to side with her hands on her knees in a perfect imitation of a belligerent goose, apparently with so close a resemblance to Hornblower as to excite a roar of laughter from the other guests. Hornblower stood in blushing confusion.

"Don't be 'ard on the young feller," said the Duchess, coming to his defence and patting him on the shoulder. "'E's on'y young, an' thet's nothink to be ashamed of. Somethink to be prard of, for thet metter, to be trusted with a ship at thet hage."

It was lucky that the announcement of dinner came to save Hornblower from the further confusion into which this kindly remark had thrown him. Hornblower naturally found himself with the riff-raff, the rag-tag-and-bobtail of the middle of the table along with the other junior officers—Sir Hew sat at one end with the Duchess while Lady Dalrymple sat with a Commodore at the other.

Moreover, there were not nearly as many women as men; that was only to be expected, as Gibraltar was, technically at least, a beleaguered fortress. So Hornblower had no woman on either side of him; at his right sat the young aide-de-camp who had first taken him in charge.

"Your health, Your Grace," said the Commodore, looking down the length of the table and raising his glass.

"Thank'ee," replied the Duchess. "Just in time to save my

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life. I was wonderin' 'oo'd come to my rescue."

She raised her brimming glass to her lips and when she put it down again it was empty.

"A jolly boon companion you are going to have," said the aide-de-camp to Hornblower.

"How is she going to be my companion?" asked Hornblower, quite bewildered.

The aide-de-camp looked at him pityingly.

"So you have not been informed?" he asked. "As always, the man most concerned is the last to know. When you sail with your despatches tomorrow you will have the honour of bearing Her Grace with you to Britain."

"God bless my soul," said Hornblower.

"Let's hope He does," said the aide-de-camp piously, nosing his wine. "Poor stuff this sweet Málaga is. Old Hare bought a job lot in '95, and every governor since then seems to think it's his duty to use it up."

"But who *is* she?" asked Hornblower.

"Her Grace the Duchess of Wharfedale," replied the aide-de-camp. "Did you not hear Lady Dalrymple's introduction?"

"But she doesn't talk like a Duchess," protested Hornblower.

"No. The old Duke was in his dotage when he married her. She was an innkeeper's widow, so her friends say. You can imagine, if you like, what her enemies say."

"But what is she doing here?" went on Hornblower.

"She is on her way back to Britain. She was at Florence when the French marched in, I understand. She reached Leghorn, and bribed a coaster to bring her here. She asked Sir Hew to find her a passage, so Sir Hew asked the Admiral."

"I see," said Hornblower.

There was a burst of merriment from the head of the table, and the Duchess was prodding the Governor's scarlet coated ribs with the handle of her knife, as if to make sure he saw the joke.

"Perhaps you will not lack for mirth on your homeward voyage," said the aide-de-camp.

Just then a smoking sirloin of beef was put down in front of Hornblower, and all his other worries vanished before the necessity of carving it and remembering his manners. He took the carving knife and fork gingerly in his hands and glanced round at the company.

"May I help you to some of this beef, Your Grace? Madam? Sir? Well done or underdone, sir? A little of the brown fat?"

In the hot room the sweat ran down his face as he wrestled with the joint; he was fortunate that most of the guests desired helpings from other dishes so that he had little carving to do. He

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put a couple of haggled slices on his own plate as the simplest way of concealing the worst results of his own handiwork.

"Beef from Tetuan," sniffed the aide-de-camp. "Tough and stringy."

That was all very well for a governor's aide-de-camp—he could not guess how delicious was this food to a young naval officer fresh from beating about at sea in an over-crowded frigate.

Even the thought of having to act as host to a Duchess could not entirely spoil Hornblower's appetite. And the final dishes, the meringues and macaroons, the custards and the fruits were ecstasy for a young man whose last pudding had been a currant duff last Sunday.

"Those sweet things spoil a man's palate," said the aide-de-camp—but much Hornblower cared.

They were drinking formal toasts now. Hornblower stood for the King and the royal family, and raised his glass for the Duchess.

"And now for the enemy," said Sir Hew, "may their treasure galleons try to cross the Atlantic."

"A supplement to that, Sir Hew," said the Commodore at the other end. "May the Dons make up their minds to leave Cadiz."

There was a growl almost like wild animals from round the table. Most of the naval officers present were from Jervis' Mediterranean squadron which had beaten about in the Atlantic for the past several months hoping to catch the Spaniards should they come out.

Jervis had to dispatch his ships to Gibraltar two at a time to replenish their stores, and these officers were from the two ships of the line present at the moment in Gibraltar.

"Johnny Jervis would say amen to that," said Sir Hew. "A bumper to the Dons, then, gentlemen, and may they come out from Cadiz."

The ladies left them then, gathered together by Lady Dalrymple, and as soon as it was decently possible Hornblower made his excuses and slipped away, determined not to be heavy with wine the night before he sailed in independent command.

Perhaps the prospect of the coming on board of the Duchess was a useful counter-irritant, and saved Hornblower from worrying too much about his first command. He was up before dawn—before even the brief Mediterranean twilight had begun—to see that his precious ship was in condition to face the sea, and the enemies who swarmed upon the sea.

He had four popgun four-pounders to deal with those enemies, which meant that he was safe from no one; his was the weakest vessel at sea, for the smallest trading brig carried

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a more powerful armament.

So that like all weak creatures, his only safety lay in flight—Hornblower looked aloft in the half-light; so much might depend on how the sails were set.

He went over the watch bill with his two watch-keeping officers, Midshipman Hunter and Master's Mate Winyatt, to make sure that every man of his crew of eleven knew his duty. Then all that remained was to put on his smartest seagoing uniform, try to eat breakfast, and wait for the Duchess.

She came early, fortunately. Their Excellencies had had to rise at a most unpleasant hour to see her off. Mr. Hunter reported the approach of the Governor's launch with suppressed excitement.

"Thank you, Mr. Hunter," said Hornblower coldly. That was what the service demanded, even though not so many weeks before they had been playing follow-my-leader through the *Indefatigable's* rigging together.

The launch swirled alongside, and two neatly dressed seamen hooked on the ladder. *Le Reve* had such a small freeboard that boarding her presented no problem even for ladies. The Governor stepped on board to the twittering of the only two pipes *Le Reve* could muster, and Lady Dalrymple followed him. Then came the Duchess, and the Duchess' companion; the latter was a younger woman, as beautiful as the Duchess must once have been. A couple of aides-de-camp followed, and by that time the minute deck of *Le Reve* was positively crowded, so that there was no room left to bring up the Duchess' baggage.

"Let us show you your quarters, Your Grace," said the Governor.

Lady Dalrymple squawked her sympathy at sight of the minute cabin, which the two cots almost filled, and everyone's head inevitably bumped against the deck beams above.

"We shall live through it," said the Duchess, stoically, "an' that's more than many a man makin' a little trip to Tyburn could say."

One of the aides-de-camp produced a last minute packet of despatches and demanded Hornblower's signature on the receipt; the last farewells were said, and Sir Hew and Lady Dalrymple went down the side again to the twittering of the pipes.

"Man the windlass!" bellowed Hornblower the moment the launch's crew bent to their oars.

A few seconds' lusty work brought *Le Reve* up to her anchor.

"Anchor's aweigh, sir," reported Winyatt.

"Jib halliards!" shouted Hornblower. "Mains'l halliards!"

Le Reve came round before the wind as her sails were set and her rudder took a grip on the water. Everyone was so busy catting

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the anchor and setting sail that it was Hornblower himself who dipped his colours in salute as *Le Reve* crept out beyond the mole before the gentle south-easter, and dipped her nose to the first of the big Atlantic rollers coming in through the Gut. Through the skylight beside him he heard a clatter and a wail, as something fell in the cabin with that first roll, but he could spare no attention for the women below.

He had the glass to his eye now, training it first on Algeciras and then upon Tarifa—some well manned privateer or ship of war might easily dash out to snap up such a defenceless prey as *Le Reve*. He could not relax while the forenoon watch wore on. They rounded Cape Marroqui and he set a course for St. Vincent, and then the mountains of Southern Spain began to sink below the horizon.

Cape Trafalgar was just visible on the starboard bow when at last he shut the telescope and began to wonder about dinner; it was pleasant to be captain of his own ship and to be able to order dinner when he chose. His aching legs told him he had been on his feet too long—eleven continuous hours; if the future brought him many independent commands he would wear himself out by this sort of behaviour.

Down below he relaxed gratefully on the locker, and sent the cook to knock at the Duchess' cabin door to ask, with his compliments, if all was well.

He heard the Duchess' sharp voice saying that they needed nothing, not even dinner. Hornblower philosophically shrugged his shoulders and ate his dinner with a young man's appetite.

He went on deck again as night closed in upon them; Winyatt had the watch.

"It's coming up thick, sir," he said.

So it was. The sun was invisible on the horizon, engulfed in watery mist. It was the price he had to pay for a fair wind, he knew; in the winter months in these latitudes there was always likely to be fog where the cool land breeze reached the Atlantic.

"It'll be thicker still by morning," he said, gloomily, and revised his night orders, setting a course due west instead of west by north as he originally intended.

He wanted to make certain of keeping clear of Cape St. Vincent in the event of fog.

That was one of those minute trifles which may affect a man's whole after life—Hornblower had plenty of time later to reflect on what might have happened had he not ordered that alteration of course.

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During the night he was often on deck, peering through the increasing mist, but at the time when the crisis came he was down below snatching a little sleep. What woke him was a seaman shaking his shoulder violently.

"Please, sir. Please, sir. Mr. Hunter sent me. Please, sir, won't you come on deck, he says, sir."

"I'll come," said Hornblower, blinking himself awake and rolling out of his cot.

The faintest beginnings of dawn were imparting some slight luminosity to the mist which was close about them. *Le Reve* was lurching over an ugly sea with barely enough wind behind her to give her steerage way. Hunter was standing with his back to the wheel in an attitude of tense anxiety.

"Listen!" he said, as Hornblower appeared.

He half whispered the word, and in his excitement he omitted the "sir" which was due to his captain—and in his excitement Hornblower did not notice the omission.

Hornblower listened. He heard the shipboard noises he could expect—the clattering of the blocks as *Le Reve* lurched, the sound of the sea at her bows. Then he heard other shipboard noises. There were other blocks clattering; the sea was breaking beneath other bows.

"There's a ship close alongside," said Hornblower.

"Yes, sir," said Hunter. "And after I sent below for you I heard an order given. And it was in Spanish—some foreign tongue, anyway."

The tenseness of fear was all about the little ship like the fog.

"Call all hands. Quietly," said Hornblower.

But as he gave the order he wondered if it would be any use. He could send his men to their stations, he could man and load the four-pounders, but if that ship out there in the fog was of any force greater than a merchant ship he was in deadly peril. Then he tried to comfort himself—perhaps the ship was some fat Spanish galleon bulging with treasure, and were he to board her boldly she would become his prize and make him rich for life.

"A 'appy Valentine's day to you," said a voice beside him; and he nearly jumped out of his skin with surprise. He had actually forgotten the presence of the Duchess on board.

"Stop that row!" he whispered furiously at her, and she pulled up abruptly in astonishment. She was bundled up in a cloak and hood against the damp air, and no further detail could be seen of her in the darkness and fog.

"May I hask—" she began.

"Shut up!" whispered Hornblower.

A harsh voice could be heard through the fog, other voices

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repeating the order, whistles being blown, much noise and bustle.

"That's Spanish, sir, isn't it?" whispered Hunter.

"Spanish for certain. They're calling the watch. Listen!"

The two double strokes of a ship's bell came to them across the water. Four bells in the morning watch. And instantly from all round them a dozen other bells could be heard, as if echoing the first.

"We're in the middle of a fleet, by God!" whispered Hunter.

"Big ships, too, sir," supplemented Winyatt, who had joined them with the calling of all hands. "I could hear half a dozen different pipes when they called the watch."

"The Dons are out, then," said Hunter.

And the course I set has taken us into the midst of them, thought Hornblower bitterly. The coincidence was maddening, heart-breaking. But he forbore to waste breath over it.

He even suppressed the frantic gibe that rose to his lips at the memory of Sir Hew's toast about the Spaniards coming out from Cadiz.

"They're setting more sail," was what he said. "Dagos snug down at night, just like some fat Indiaman. They only set their t'gallants at daybreak."

All round them through the fog could be heard the whine of sheaves in blocks, the stamp-and-go of the men at the halliards, the sound of ropes thrown on decks, the chatter of a myriad voices.

"They make enough noise about it, blast 'em," said Hunter.

The tension under which he laboured was apparent as he stood straining to peer through the mist.

"Please God they're on a different course from us," said Winyatt, more sensibly. "Then we'll soon be through 'em."

"Not likely," said Hornblower.

Le Reve was running almost directly before what little wind there was; if the Spaniards were beating against it or had it on their beam they would be crossing her course at a considerable angle, so that the volume of sound from the nearest ship would have diminished or increased considerably in this time, and there was no indication of that whatever. It was far more likely that *Le Reve* had overhauled the Spanish fleet under its nightly short canvas and had sailed forward into the middle of it. It was a problem what to do next in that case, to shorten sail, or to heave to, and let the Spaniards get ahead of them again, or to clap on sail to pass on through.

But the passage of the minutes brought clear proof that fleet and sloop were on practically the same course, as otherwise they could hardly fail to pass some ship close. As long as the mist held

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they were safest as they were.

But that was hardly to be expected with the coming of day.

"Can't we alter course, sir?" asked Winyatt.

"Wait," said Hornblower.

In the faint growing light he had seen shreds of denser mist blowing past them—a clear indication that they could not hope for continuous fog. At that moment they ran out of a fog bank into a clear patch of water.

"There she is, by God!" said Hunter.

Both officers and seamen began to move about in sudden panic.

"Stand still, damn you!" rasped Hornblower, his nervous tension releasing itself in the fierce monosyllables.

Less than a cable's length away a three decked ship of the line was standing along parallel to them on their starboard side. Ahead and on the port side could be seen the outlines, still shadowy, of other battleships.

Nothing could save them if they drew attention to themselves; all that could be done was to keep going as if they had as much right there as the ships of the line.

It was possible that in the happy-go-lucky Spanish navy the officer of the watch over there did not know that no sloop like *Le Reve* was attached to the fleet—or even possibly by a miracle there *might* be one. *Le Reve* was French built and French rigged, after all. Side by side, *Le Reve* and the battleship sailed over the lumpy sea.

They were within point blank range of fifty big guns, when one well aimed shot would sink them. Hunter was uttering filthy curses under his breath, but discipline had asserted itself; a telescope over there on the Spaniard's deck would not discover any suspicious bustle on board the sloop.

Another shred of fog drifted past them, and then they were deep in a fresh fog bank.

"Thank God!" said Hunter, indifferent to the contrast between this present piety and his preceding blasphemy.

"Hands wear ship," said Hornblower. "Lay her on the port tack."

There was no need to tell the hands to do it quietly; they were as well aware of their danger as anyone. *Le Reve* silently rounded-to, the sheets were hauled in and coiled down without a sound; and the sloop, as close to the wind as she would lie, heeled to the small wind, meeting the lumpy waves with her port bow.

"We'll be crossing their courses now," said Hornblower.

"Please God it'll be under their sterns and not their bows," said Winyatt.

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There was the Duchess still in her cloak and hood, standing right aft, as much out of the way as possible.

"Don't you think Your Grace had better go below?" asked Hornblower, making use by a great effort of the formal form of address.

"Oh, no, *please*," said the Duchess. "I couldn't bear it."

Hornblower shrugged his shoulders, and promptly forgot the Duchess' presence again as a new anxiety struck him. He dived below and came up again with the two big sealed envelopes of despatches.

He took a belaying pin from the rail and began very carefully to tie the envelopes to the pin with a bit of line.

"Please," said the Duchess, "please, Mr. Hornblower, tell me what you are doing?"

"I want to make sure these will sink when I throw them overboard if we're captured," said Hornblower grimly.

"Then they'll be lost for good?"

"Better that than that the Spaniards should read 'em," said Hornblower with all the patience he could muster.

"I could look after them for you," said the Duchess. "Indeed I could."

Hornblower looked keenly at her.

"No," he said, "they might search your baggage. Probably they would."

"Baggage!" said the Duchess. "As if I'd put them in my baggage! I'll put them next my skin; they won't search *me* in any case. They'll never find 'em, not if I put 'em up my petticoats."

There was a brutal realism about those words that staggered Hornblower a little, but which also brought him to admit to himself that there was something in what the Duchess was saying.

"If they capture us," said the Duchess—"I pray they won't, but if they do—they'll never keep me prisoner. You know that. They'll send me to Lisbon or put me aboard a King's ship as soon as they can. Then the despatches will be delivered eventually. Late, but better late than never."

"That's so," mused Hornblower.

"I'll guard them like my life," said the Duchess. "I swear I'll never part from them. I'll tell no one I have them, not until I hand them to a King's Officer."

She met Hornblower's eyes with transparent honesty in her expression.

"Fog's thinning, sir," said Winyatt.

"Quick!" said the Duchess.

There was no time for further debate. Hornblower slipped the

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envelopes from their binding of rope and handed them over to her, and replaced the belaying pin in the rail.

"These damned French fashions," said the Duchess. "I was right when I said I'd put these letters up my petticoats. There's no room in my bosom."

Certainly the upper part of her gown was not at all capacious; the waist was close up under the armpits and the rest of the dress hung down from there quite straight, in utter defiance of anatomy.

"Give me a yard of that rope, quick!" said the Duchess.

Winyatt cut her a length of the line with his knife and handed it to her. Already she was hauling at her petticoats; the appalled Hornblower saw a gleam of white thigh above her stocking tops before he tore his glance away. The fog was certainly thinning.

"You can look at me now," said the Duchess, but her petticoats only just fell in time as Hornblower looked round again. "They're inside my shift, next my skin as I promised. With these modern fashions, no one wears stays any more. So I tied the rope round my waist outside my shift. One envelope is flat against my chest and the other against my back. Would you suspect anything?"

She turned round for Hornblower's inspection.

"No, nothing shows," he said. "I must thank Your Grace."

"There is a certain thickening," said the Duchess, "but it does not matter what the Spaniards suspect as long as they do not suspect the truth."

Momentary cessation of the need for action brought some embarrassment to Hornblower. To discuss with a woman her shift and stays—or the absence of them—was a strange thing to do.

A watery sun, still nearly level, was breaking through the mist and shining in his eyes. The mainsail cast a watery shadow on the deck. With every second the sun was growing brighter.

"Here it comes," said Hunter.

The horizon ahead expanded rapidly, from a few yards to a hundred, from a hundred yards to half a mile. The sea was covered with ships. No less than six were in plain sight, four ships of the line and two big frigates, with the red-and-gold of Spain at their mastheads, and, what marked them even more obviously as Spaniards huge wooden crosses hanging at their peaks.

"Wear ship again, Mr. Hunter," said Hornblower. "Back into the fog."

That was the one chance of safety. Those ships running down towards them were bound to ask questions, and they could not hope to avoid them all. *Le Reve* spun round on her heel, but the fog bank from which she had emerged was already attenuated, sucked up by the thirsty sun. They could see a drifting stretch

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of it ahead, but it was lazily rolling away from them at the same time as it was dwindling. The heavy sound of a cannon shot reached their ears, and close on their starboard quarter a ball threw up a fountain of water before plunging into the side of a wave just ahead. Hornblower looked round just in time to see the last of the puff of smoke from the bows of the frigate astern pursuing them.

"Starboard two points," he said to the helmsman, trying to gauge at one and the same moment the frigate's course, the direction of the wind, the bearing of the other ships, and that of the thin last nucleus of that wisp of fog.

"Starboard two points," said the helmsman.

"Fore and main sheets!" said Hunter.

Another shot, far astern this time, but laid true for line; Hornblower suddenly remembered the Duchess.

"You must go below, Your Grace," he said, curtly.

"Oh, no, no, no!" burst out the Duchess with angry vehemence. "Please let me stay here. I can't go below to where that seasick maid of mine lies hoping to die. Not in that stinking box of a cabin."

There would be no safety in that cabin, Hornblower reflected—*Le Reve's* scantlings were too fragile to keep out any shot at all. Down below the water line in the hold the women might be safe, but they would have to lie flat on the top of beef barrels.

"Sail ahead!" screamed the look-out.

The mist there was parting and the outline of a ship of the line was emerging from it, less than a mile away and on almost the same course as *Le Reve's*. Thud—thud from the frigate astern. Those gunshots by now would have warned the whole Spanish fleet that something unusual was happening. The battleship ahead would know that the little sloop was being pursued. A ball tore through the air close by, with its usual terrifying noise. The ship ahead was awaiting their coming; Hornblower saw her topsails slowly turning.

"Hands to the sheets!" said Hornblower. "Mr. Hunter, jib her over."

Le Reve came round again, heading for the lessening gap on the port side. The frigate astern turned to intercept. More jets of smoke from her bows.

With an appalling noise a shot passed within a few feet of Hornblower, so that the wind of it made him stagger. There was a hole in the mainsail.

"Your Grace," said Hornblower, "those aren't warning shots—"

It was the ship of the line which fired then, having succeeded

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in clearing away and manning some of her upper deck guns. It was as if the end of the world had come. One shot hit *Le Reve's* hull, and they felt the deck heave under their feet as if the little ship were disintegrating. But the mast was hit at the same moment, stays and shrouds parting, splinters raining all round. Mast, sails, boom, gaff and all went from above them over the side to windward. The wreckage dragged in the sea and turned the helpless wreck round with the last of her way. The little group aft stood momentarily dazed.

"Anybody hurt?" asked Hornblower, recovering himself.

"On'y a scratch, sir," said one voice.

It seemed a miracle that no one was killed.

"Carpenter's mate, sound the well," said Hornblower; and then, recollecting himself: "No, damn it. Belay that order. If the Dons can save the ship, let 'em try."

Already the ship of the line whose salvo had done the damage was filling her topsails again and bearing away from them, while the frigate which had pursued them was running down on them fast.

A wailing figure came scrambling out of the after hatchway. It was the Duchess' maid, so mad with terror that her seasickness was forgotten. The Duchess put a protective arm round her and tried to comfort her.

"Your Grace had better look to your baggage," said Hornblower. "No doubt you'll be leaving us shortly for other quarters with the Dons. I hope you will be more comfortable."

He was trying desperately hard to speak in a matter of fact way, as if nothing out of the ordinary were happening, as if he was not soon to be a prisoner of the Spaniards; but the Duchess saw the working of the usually firm mouth, and noticed that the hands were tightly clenched.

"How can I tell you how sorry I am about this?" asked the Duchess, her voice soft with pity.

"That makes it the harder for me to bear," said Hornblower—and he even forced a smile.

The Spanish frigate was just rounding-to, a cable's length to windward.

"Please, sir," said Hunter.

"Well?"

"We can fight, sir. You give the word. Cold shot to drop in the boats when they try to board. We could beat 'em off once, perhaps."

Hornblower's tortured misery nearly made him snap out "Don't be a fool," but he checked his tongue. He contented himself with pointing to the frigate. Twenty guns were glaring at them at far

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less than point-blank range. The very boat the frigate was hoisting out would be manned by at least twice as many men as *Le Reve* carried—she was no bigger than many a pleasure yacht. It was not odds of ten to one, or a hundred to one, but odds of ten thousand to one.

"I understand, sir," said Hunter.

Now the Spanish frigate's boat was in the water, about to shove off.

"A private word with you, please, Mr. Hornblower," said the Duchess suddenly.

Hunter and Winyatt heard what she said, and withdrew out of earshot.

"Yes, Your Grace?" said Hornblower.

The Duchess stood there, still with her arm round her weeping maid, looking straight at him.

"I'm no more of a Duchess than you are," she said.

"Good God!" said Hornblower. "Who—who are you, then?"

"Kitty Cobham."

The name meant a little to Hornblower, but only a little.

"You're too young for that name to have any memories for you, Mr. Hornblower, I see. It's five years since last I trod the boards."

That was it. Kitty Cobham the actress.

"I can't tell it all now," said the Duchess—the Spanish boat was dancing over the waves towards them. "But when the French marched into Florence that was only the last of my misfortunes. I was penniless when I escaped from them. Who would lift a finger for a one-time actress—one who had been betrayed and deserted? What was I to do? But a Duchess—that was another story. The bigwigs at Gibraltar could not do enough for the Duchess of Wharfedale."

"Why did you choose that title?" asked Hornblower, in spite of himself.

"I knew of her," said the Duchess with a shrug of the shoulders. "I knew her to be what I played her as. That was why I chose her—I always played character parts better than straight comedy. And not nearly so tedious in a long rôle."

"But my despatches!" said Hornblower in a sudden panic of realization. "Give them back, quick."

"If you wish me to," said the Duchess. "But I can still be the Duchess when the Spaniards come. They will still set me free as speedily as they can. I'll guard those despatches better than my life—I swear it, I swear it! In less than a month I'll deliver them, if you trust me."

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Hornblower looked at the pleading eyes. She might be a spy, ingeniously trying to preserve the despatches from being thrown overboard before the Spaniards took possession. But no spy could have hoped that *Le Reve* would run into the midst of the Spanish fleet.

"I made use of the bottle, I know," said the Duchess. "I drank. Yes, I did. But I stayed sober in Gibraltar, didn't I? And I won't touch a drop, not a drop, until I'm in Britain. I'll swear that, too. Please, sir—please. I beg of you. Let me do what I can for my country."

It was a strange decision for a man of nineteen to have to make—one who had never exchanged a word with an actress in his life before. A harsh voice overside told him that the Spanish boat was about to hook on.

"Keep them, then," said Hornblower. "Deliver them when you can."

He had not taken his eyes from her face. He was looking for a gleam of triumph in her expression. Had he seen anything of the sort he would have torn the despatches from her body at that moment. But all he saw was the natural look of pleasure, and it was then that he made up his mind to trust her—not before.

"Oh, thank you, sir," said the Duchess.

The Spanish boat had hooked on now, and a Spanish lieutenant was awkwardly trying to climb aboard. He arrived on the deck on his hands and knees, and Hornblower stepped over to receive him as he got to his feet. Captor and captive exchanged bows. Hornblower could not understand what the Spaniard said, but obviously they were formal sentences that he was using. The Spaniard caught sight of the two women aft, and halted in surprise; Hornblower hastily made the presentation in what he hoped was Spanish.

"*Señor el tenánte Español,*" he said, "*Señora la Duquésa de Wharfedale.*"

The title clearly had its effect; the lieutenant bowed profoundly, and his bow was received with the most lofty aloofness by the Duchess. Hornblower could be sure the despatches were safe. That was some alleviation of the misery of standing here on the deck of his waterlogged little ship, a prisoner of the Spaniards. As he waited he heard, from far to leeward, roll upon roll of thunder coming up against the wind. No thunder could endure that long.

What he could hear must be the broadsides of ships in action—of fleets in action. Somewhere over there by Cape St. Vincent the British fleet must have caught the Spaniards at last. Fiercer and fiercer sounded the roll of the artillery. There was excitement

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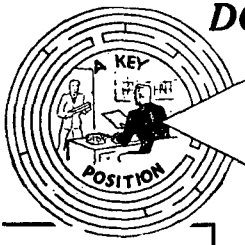

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among the Spaniards who had scrambled on to the deck of *Le Reve*, while Hornblower stood bareheaded waiting to be taken into captivity.

Captivity was a dreadful thing. Once the numbness had worn off Hornblower came to realize what a dreadful thing it was. Not even the news of the dreadful battering which the Spanish Navy had received at St. Vincent could relieve the misery and despair of being a prisoner.

It was not the physical conditions—ten square feet of floor space per man in an empty sail loft at Ferrol along with other captive warrant officers—for they were no worse than what a junior officer often had to put up with at sea. It was the loss of freedom, the fact of being a captive, that was so dreadful.

There were four months of it before the first letter came through to Hornblower; the Spanish government, inefficient in all ways, had the worst postal system in Europe. But here was the letter, addressed and re-addressed, now safely in his hands after he had practically snatched it from a stupid Spanish officer who had been puzzling over the strange name.

Hornblower did not know the handwriting, and when he broke the seal and opened the letter the salutation made him think for a moment that he had opened someone else's letter.

Darling Boy, it began. Now who on earth would call him that? He read on in a dream.

Darling Boy—

I hope it will give you happiness to hear that what you gave me has reached its destination. They told me, when I delivered it, that you are a prisoner, and my heart bleeds for you. And they told me, too, that they were pleased with you for what you had done. And one of those admirals is a shareholder in Drury Lane. Whoever would have thought of such a thing? But he smiled at me, and I smiled at him. I did not know he was a shareholder then, and I only smiled out of the kindness of my heart. And all that I told him about my dangers and perils with my precious burden were only histrionic exercises, I am afraid. Yet he believed me, and so struck was he by my smile and my adventures that he demanded a part for me from Sherry; and, behold! now I am playing second lead—usually a tragic mother—and receiving the acclaim of the groundlings.

There are compensations in growing old, which I am discovering, too. And I have not tasted wine since I saw you last, nor shall I ever again. As one more reward, my admiral promised me that he would forward this letter to you in the next cartel—an expression

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which, no doubt, means more to you than to me. I only hope that it reaches you in good time and brings you comfort in your affliction.

I pray nightly for you.

Ever your devoted friend,
Katharine Cobham.

Comfort in his affliction? A little, perhaps. There was some comfort in knowing that the despatches had been delivered; there was some comfort in a second-hand report that Their Lordships were pleased with him. There was comfort even in knowing that the Duchess was re-established on the stage. But the sum total was nothing compared with his misery.

Here was a guard come to bring him to the Commandant, and beside the Commandant was the Irish renegade who served as interpreter. There were further papers on the Commandant's desk—it looked as if the same cartel which had brought in Kitty Cobham's note had brought in letters for the Commandant.

"Good afternoon, sir," said the Commandant, always polite, offering a chair.

"Good afternoon, sir, and many thanks," said Hornblower. He was learning Spanish slowly and painfully.

"You have been promoted," said the Irishman in English.

"W—what?" said Hornblower.

"Promoted," said the Irishman. "Here is the letter—'*The Spanish authorities are informed that on account of his meritorious service the acting commission of Mr. Horatio Hornblower, Midshipman and Acting Lieutenant, has been confirmed. Their Lordships of the Admiralty express their confidence that Mr. Horatio Hornblower will be admitted immediately to the privileges of commissioned rank.*' There you are, young man."

"My felicitations, sir," said the Commandant.

"Many thanks, sir," said Hornblower.

The Commandant was a kindly old gentleman with a pleasant smile for the awkward young man. He went on to say more, but Hornblower's Spanish was not equal to the technicalities he used, and Hornblower in despair looked at the interpreter.

"Now that you are a commissioned officer," said the latter, "you will be transferred to the quarters for captured officers."

"Thank you," said Hornblower.

"You will receive half the pay of your rank."

"Thank you, sir," said Hornblower.

"And your parole will be accepted. You will be at liberty to visit in the town and the neighbourhood for two hours each day on giving your parole."

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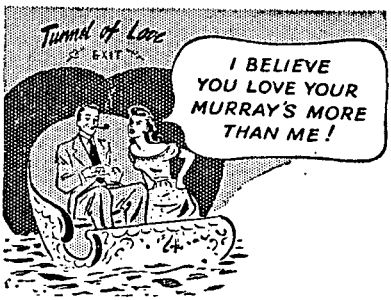

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"Thank you, indeed, sir," said Hornblower, with new comprehension.

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* * *

ANSWERS to TALL STORY on page 16

1. *The Cyclops Polyphemus, made drunk and blinded by Odysseus, in Homer's Odyssey.*
2. *Giant Despair, who lived in Doubting Castle and captured Christian and Hopeful, in John Bunyan's "The Pilgrim's Progress."*
3. *Alice, after eating the mushroom, in "Alice's Adventures in Wonderland," by Lewis Carroll.*
4. *Galligantus, in the nursery tale of Jack the Giant-Killer.*
5. *The windmills, believed to be giants and attacked with abandon by Don Quixote in Cervantes' romance.*
6. *Goliath, in the Old Testament Book of Samuel.*
7. *Little John, in the Robin Hood ballads.*
8. *Grumbo, the giant in the old nursery tale of Tom Thumb. The insect was, of course, Tom.*
9. *The smith, in H. W. Longfellow's poem, "The Village Blacksmith."*
10. *Gargantua the giant, in Rabelais' "Gargantua."*

* * *

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 160

Across: 6, Field dressing. 8, Regale. 9, Lollipop. 10, She. 11, Chilli. 12, Simplify. 14, Limoges. 16, Spectre. 20, Off stage. 23, Narrow. 24, Vim. 25, Fearsome. 26, Orange. 27, Disparagement.

Down: 1, Seraglio. 2, Adhesive. 3, Artless. 4, Asylum. 5, Finial. 6, Fresh air fiend. 7, Good for nought. 13, Pie. 15, Got. 17, Pin money. 18, Carcases. 19, Several. 21, Stress. 22, Avowal.

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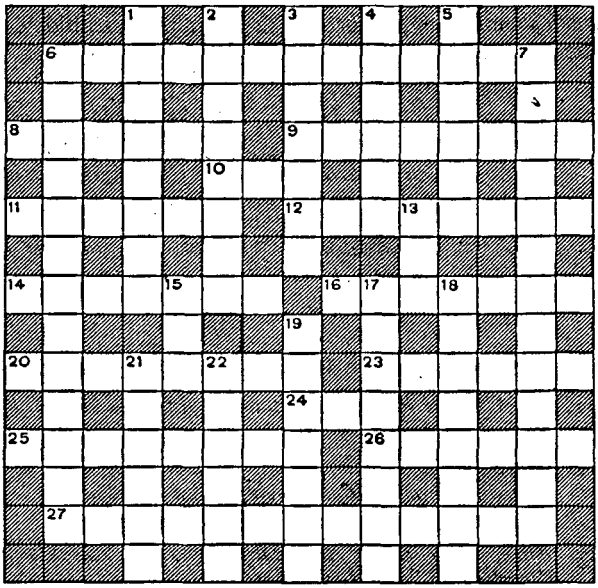
ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 159



CLUES

Across

6 Agricultural first aid before sowing? (5, 8).

8 Entertain choicely in more than royal fashion (6).

9 A lazy yet explosive sweetmeat (8).

10 Respected parent on the distaff side of a green-eyed household pet (3).

11 Not a cooling spice as one might suppose (6).

12 One would do this for the children's clues (8).

14 Ancient king among the trees in France (7).

16 Should one respect this apparition? (7).

20 Where the players are heard but not seen (3, 5).

23 The slimmest part of an arrow head (6).

24 In energy I shield five from a thousand (3).

25 Not that being more safe would prevent timidity (8).

26 This colourful prince was married at fifteen, his bride at five years less (6).

27 Men rage at dips and bring them into disrepute (13).

Down

1 Go, in serial form (8).

2 He's in a drinking den and likely to stick there (8).

3 "In love the—catch the game, And they scarce miss who never aim" (Matthew Green) (7).

4 Often the poet's inviolable shelter (6).

5 Ornamental finish in architecture (6).

6 Not a demon suffering from asphyxiation (5, 3, 5).

7 Virtue to no avail? (4, 3, 6).

13 Plum perhaps? (3).

15 In this is perhaps some bullion (3).

17 Allowance, for hitting the jack-pot, perhaps? (3, 5).

18 Are these bodies concerned with the packing of motors? (8).

19 Vera is in French seasoning (7).

21 Pressure always needed in poetry (6).

22 Cordelia made one very frankly to her father (6).

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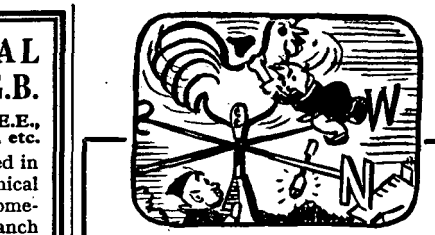

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